The Wire 471 May 2023

TheWire

Adventures in Sound and Music

The Wire 471 May 2023

Paul Dunmall
Laura Ortman
San Diego hardcore

Dwight Trible
PoiL Ueda
Luciano Maggiore
Alison Cotton
Jason Moran
Quartz-Mirliton
Women From Space
Pauline Oliveros
Henry Threadgill
Regis
Verity Susman

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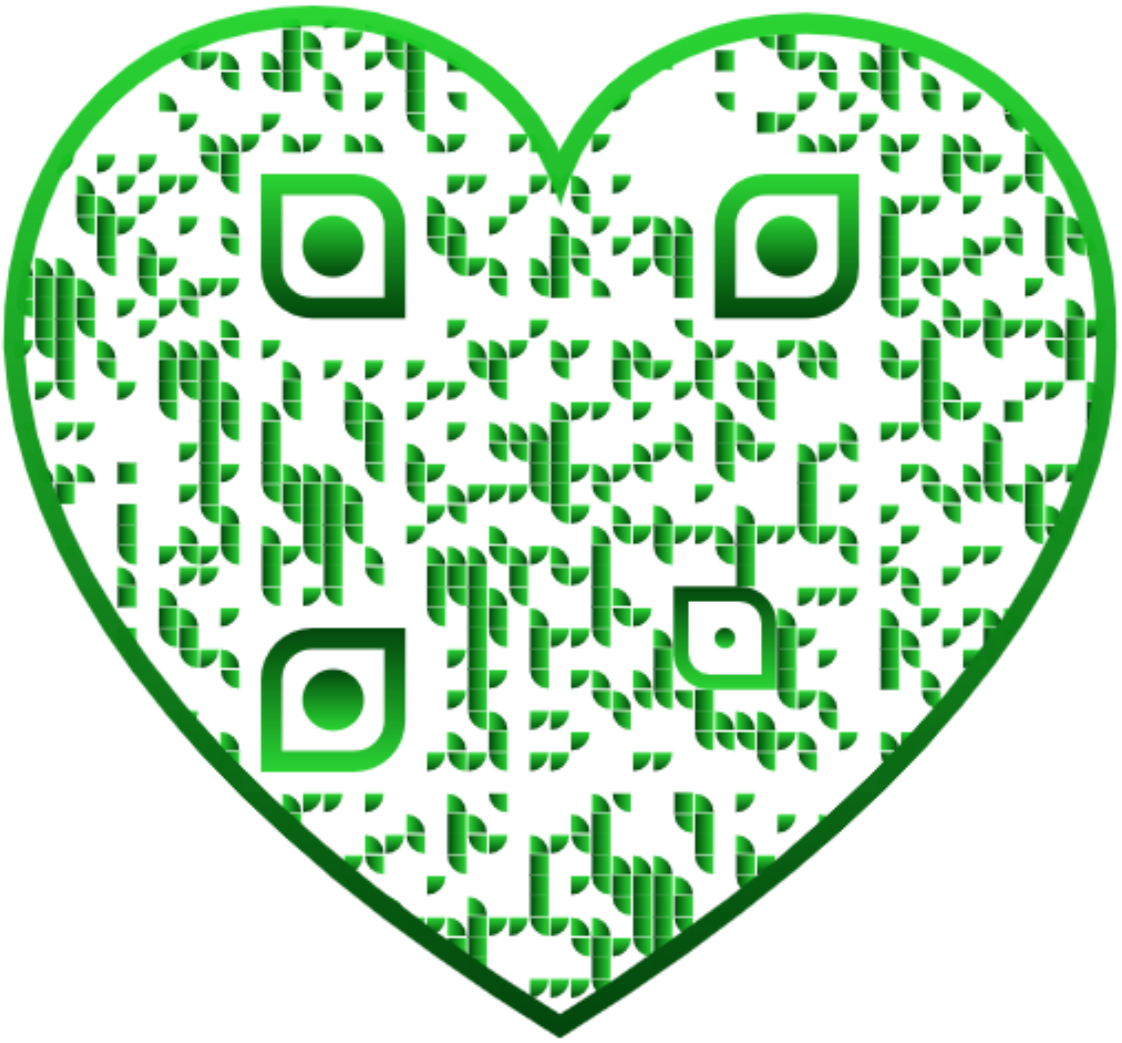
A different drummer

Dave Lombardo

From Slayer to solo

Dave Lombardo / Paul Dunmall / San Diego hardcore / Laura Ortman



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In a warm, dark theatre in Bergen, Norway, the quartet YrrY are taking to the stage. Vocalist Mari Garcés adjusts the stand of her microphone, sending unexpected shockwaves through the audience. Owen Weaver repeats a lazy dumpf-dumpf figure across the drum kit, feeling the tightness of the skins. It's when vibraphonist Håkon Skjæret removes the tone bars of his instrument that I realise something's up. The piece they're playing at Borealis festival, Luke Drozd's *An Interpretation Of An Overhearing Of A Collection Of Coincidences 15*, harnesses the mundane activities of the soundcheck for a performance celebrating their disruptive noise-making potential.

But even ordinary soundchecks carry an alchemical charge. Few experiences at a festival are more magical than walking from one busy stage to another empty one, where the lights are up, a new performance is being readied, and you can freely observe how it's put together. Connection, preparation and arrangement of equipment take on the status of a musical composition in its own right.

Soundchecks present the jigsaw pieces from which the whole picture is made. Comments underneath a YouTube video of Metallica getting ready to play eulogise the rippling harp sound of James Hetfield's naked 12-string guitar. In my local pub, a drummer tests out the kit in an empty room before a jazz night, the wires beneath the snare fizzing like sparks from exposed electric cables.

This messy and mundane process doesn't make for gripping viewing on a screen, so videos rarely communicate the experience. Soundchecks are literally site-specific performances, resonating in a particular place.

But they can lay bare the full potential of a musical unit in a way that a packed room hides. I remember the anticipation for Shellac before one of their many appearances at the UK's All Tomorrow's Parties festival, where Steve Albini and Bob Weston briefly tinkered with their instruments and mysterious, futuristic amplifiers to unleash sounds from an entirely different frequency spectrum to rock 'n' roll. A soundcheck of Johnny Clarke's backing band at the London club Dingwall's in the 2000s had his bassist playing at a volume where precise and delicate hands were needed to keep enormous low frequencies in check.

It wasn't a soundcheck, but another Borealis performance that got up close and personal with how the music was put together. White Mountain Apache violinist Laura Ortman, the subject of this month's Invisible Jukebox, played a wild set of solo improvisation in a small bar space, with her effects pedals at the front of the stage just centimetres from the midriffs of the crowd. As she clawed at the strings of her instrument, slamming objects onto the bridge to create explosions of noise, she kicked the dials on the pedals to just the right place with the point of her shoe to maintain a level of feverish intensity in the room. Standing just a metre or two from a screaming PA, I slotted in earplugs to feel the music through my body for the rest of the set. Like a soundcheck, you just had to be there.

Derek Walmsley

Distribution

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Europe
state51
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shaun@state51.com

USA
Forced Exposure
Fax 781 321 0321
AVisser@forcedexposure.com

Rest of World
Contact *The Wire* direct
Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5022
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011
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The Wire
William Pitt Room,
New Wing, Somerset House,
London WC2R 1LA, UK
Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5010
fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011
thewire.co.uk
@thewiremagazine
Subscriptions subs@thewire.co.uk
Events listings listings@thewire.co.uk

Publisher/Director Tony Herrington tony@thewire.co.uk
Editor-in-Chief/Director Chris Bohn chris@thewire.co.uk

Editor Derek Walmsley derek@thewire.co.uk
Deputy Editors
Emily Bick emily@thewire.co.uk
Joseph Stannard joe@thewire.co.uk

Advertising & Licensing Manager
Shane Woolman shane@thewire.co.uk
Advertising Sales
James Gormley james@thewire.co.uk

Online Editor
Meg Woof meg@thewire.co.uk

Listings & Newsletter Editor
Phil England phil@thewire.co.uk

Subscriptions & online shop
Misha Farrant subs@thewire.co.uk

Art Direction
Guillaume Chuard (ard.works) guillaume@thewire.co.uk
Design
Gareth Lindsay gareth@thewire.co.uk
Sean Charlton White design@thewire.co.uk
Photo Editor
Amy Gwatkin amy@thewire.co.uk

Subscriptions & Systems Consultant
Ben House ben@thewire.co.uk
Online Development
Dorian Fraser Moore dorian@thewire.co.uk

Words
Yewande Adeniran, Vanessa Ague, Jennifer Lucy Allan, Steve Barker, Mike Barnes, Dan Barrow, Robert Barry, Tristan Bath, Clive Bell, Claire Biddles, Abi Bliss, Gabriel Bristow, Britt Brown, Madeleine Byrne, Helena Celle, Philip Clark, Byron Coley, Lara C Cory, Julian Cowley, Raymond Cummings, Laina Dawes, Josh Feola, Phil Freeman, Noel Gardner, Michael A Gonzales, Francis Gooding, Kurt Gottschalk, Louise Gray, George Grella, James Hadfield, Andy Hamilton, Adam Harper, Jim Haynes, Ken Hollings, Miloš Hroch, Jo Hutton, Leah Kardos, Kek-W, Joshua Minsoo Kim, Biba Kopf, Matt Krefting, Steph Kretowicz, Neil Kulkarni, Chloe Lula, Dave Mandl, Howard Mandel, Peter Margasak, Marc Masters, Ryan Meehan, Noel Meek, Bill Meyer, Frances Morgan, John Morrison, Brian Morton, Joe Muggs, Deborah Nash, Daniel Neofetou, Louis Pattison, Hannah Pezzack, Stephanie Phillips, Antonio Poscic, Emily Pothast, Edwin Pouncey, Chal Ravens, Mosi Reeves, Tony Rettman, Simon Reynolds, Mariam Rezaei, Ilia Rogatchevski, Bruce Russell, Sukhdev Sandhu, Claire Sawers, Dave Segal, Stewart Smith, Rosie Esther Solomon, Daniel Spicer, Richard Stacey, Richard Thomas, Dave Tompkins, Spenser Tomson, David Toop, Rob Turner, Zakia Uddin, Gabriel Jermaine Vanlandingham-Dunn, Val Wilmer

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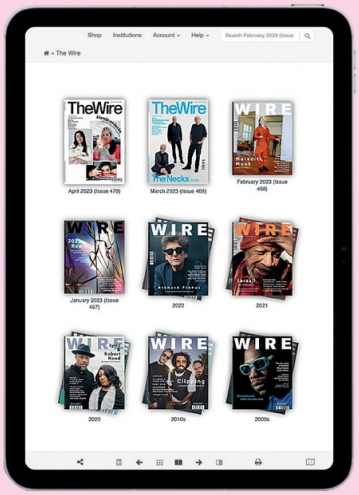

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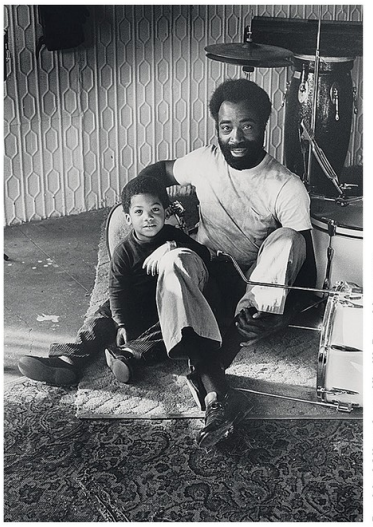

Rashied Ali and son Khalil, Brooklyn, 1971

Brooklyn bridged
Although I have not seen a copy of *The Williamsburg Avant Garde: Experimental Music And Sound On The Brooklyn Waterfront*, the fact that Dave Mandl does not mention the early days in his review [Print Run, *The Wire* 468] leads me to think this vital period has been overlooked.

The Williamsburg Pioneers, as this loose assemblage of African-American musicians and artists became known, moved across the river from Manhattan and into this run down area of Brooklyn in the 1960s. Drummer Rashied Ali and painter/musician Marzette Watts converted a decaying loft on Broadway, to be followed by people such as Don Cherry and Marion Brown and a host of others. John Coltrane rehearsed there too.

Significantly, at a time when no other American people of colour lived in this area, these intrepid souls built a community. They practised their art, raised families, then moved on as a certain kind of hippy gentrification moved in. It would be an injustice, and a distortion of the historical record, if these people were being overlooked by the chroniclers of the fertile scene that mushroomed in their wake.

Any readers looking to discover more about this period should check out my article "Once Upon a Time in Williamsburg" in *The Wire* 436. And they should also see Aidan Levy's Sonny Rollins biography *Saxophone Colossus* for a considerable amount about the time the saxophonist played daily on the Williamsburg Bridge.
Val Wilmer, London, UK

Post-it note
I would just like to give a shout out to my new postie who left a card saying I had something to collect from the local post office. Fully expecting a court summons or suchlike, I was in fact delighted to have a pristine copy of *The Wire* 470 handed to me – a wonderful alternative to the traditional fold and jam through the letterbox delivery. What a star.

Great to see the stellar NikNak getting a holler in The Masthead too [same issue] – her recent *Night* EP is as beguiling and exploratory as ever.

My eyeballs are still acclimatising to the new font in the reviews section but the content has never dipped below excellent in my 25+ years of purchases.
Tom Bristow, Blandford Forum, UK

Pending review
Seeing an advert for new books from Duke University Press in the current issue [*The Wire* 470] made me wonder if I'd seen a *Wire* review for their recently published *Ain't But A Few Of Us: Black Music Writers Tell Their Story* edited by Willard Jenkins. I don't think I have (unless I missed it of course), but I imagine it would be a thought provoking book deserving of a wide readership and attention from aware music magazines like *The Wire*.
Michael Gregg, Bristol, UK

Ain't But A Few Of Us is scheduled to be reviewed in the June issue – EB

Volume control
Back in 1966 I purchased *The Paul Butterfield Blues Band*. The record carried the instruction, "Play loud", which I did, pushing my little Dansette to its limits. Decades later, Phill Niblock's *Four Walls Of Sound* arrived in my collection. This contained the command, "You should play the music very loud. If the neighbours don't complain, it's probably not loud enough". This was more of a challenge, taking double glazing and somewhat distant neighbours into account.

At a live gig, the decision has been taken for us by the musicians, but at home we have no guidelines as to what volume a piece of music should be best appreciated at. Playing loud enough to exclude all peripheral noise is not always the best option. Sometimes, as I found out recently, there can be much pleasure in playing quietly enough to hear the creaks of the house or the unexpected additional harmonies from the neighbour's chickens.
John Coldwell, via email

In concert
I am an independent writer currently undertaking research into the concert that The Ornette Coleman Trio gave at Fairfield Hall in Croydon, England on 29 August 1965. This was the first time British audiences had had the opportunity to hear Ornette play. In order to sidestep the quota system imposed by the British Musicians' Union, Ornette needed to be classified as a "concert artist", and, within the space of two weeks, composed *Sounds And Forms For Wind Quintet*, which was performed at the concert. A recording of the concert was released in 1967 by Polydor as *An Evening With Ornette Coleman*. It has been reissued a number of times since under different titles including *Ornette Coleman In Europe*, *The Great London Concert* and *The Croydon Concert*.

I am trying to trace people who attended this gig in order to collect their memories of the evening. I am also interested to hear from those who have heard the recording of the concert for their views on the importance and significance of the event.

If anyone is interested in sharing their memories or thoughts I would love to hear from them. I can be contacted on email at improvisingschool@yahoo.co.uk.
Nick Sorensen, Emeritus Professor of Education, Bath Spa University, UK

Corrections
Issue 470: in The Columns, Espinoza/Long Duo's *Magical Aliveness* was mistitled *Musical Aliveness*, and Espinoza is the correct spelling, not Espinosa.

We welcome letters from readers. Write to us at letters@thewire.co.uk. Letters may be edited.

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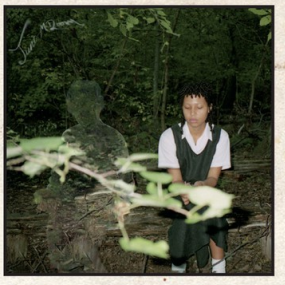

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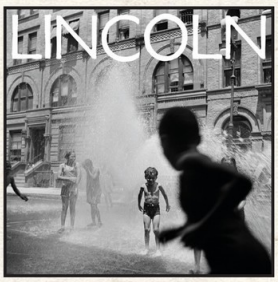

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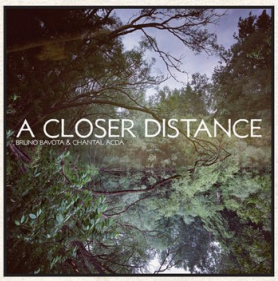

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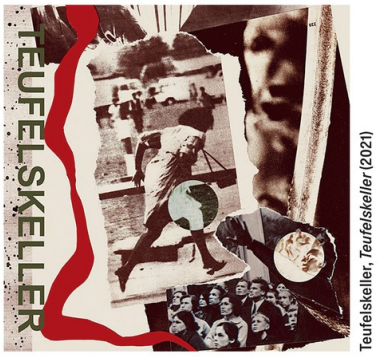
Unlimited Editions: WV Sorcerer Productions

The Paris based label offers a conduit for shamanic sounds and unrepresented cultures from Asia and beyond

By Josh Feola

Mong Tong, *Music From Taiwan Mystery* (2021)



Teufelskeller, *Teufelskeller* (2021)

Wū [巫] is the Chinese character for sorcerer or shaman, and the inspiration for outer Paris based label WV Sorcerer Productions. It connotes a lifelong interest of label founder Shen Ruotan in the sounds and sights of ancient ritual, but also contemporary humans' relationship to nature, mediated as it is by a layer of industrial machinery. "Personally I'm interested in shamanism and the connection between nature and humans, and also the connection with nature and machines," he explains. "We live in this world now and it's impossible to avoid all this sound."

The visual aesthetic of the label, stark and sigil-like, has come to represent a mark of quality to those intrigued by its curated mix of releases. They come from a wide geographical range and occupy a sonic spectrum from traditional and ritualistic, to metallic and coarse, or to contemplative and mystical. "It's a ceremony for today's world," says Ruotan.

Originally from Nanjing in eastern China, Ruotan moved to Paris in 2006 to study architecture and has lived in France since. Today he works as a graphic designer and spends much of his free time on the label, a one-man operation. What started as a mail order distro specialising in Chinese metal flipped to label mode with 2015's *Live In Paris*, a document of a performance by Beijing based artists Li Jianhong, Wei Wei, Wang Ziheng and Li Qing at Palais de Tokyo the previous year.

From then to now, WV Sorcerer has evolved as a DIY network steadily expanding its purview. Many releases come from Taiwan: the ritualistic industrial noise of Scattered Purgatory's *God Of Silver Grass*, the mystical island synthscapes of Mong Tong's *Music From Taiwan Mystery*, and the uninhibited freakout psych of Dope Purple's *Grateful End* are three distinct nodes from which to start.

These artists fall far apart on the genre map, but Ruotan sees a connection to place and nature running through them. He recalls playing a show in Taiwan in 2017 and being taken to a remote mountain temple in morning mist, located next to a sulphur mine. "All this landscape, with the smell – at that moment I understood more about how the Taiwanese bands I worked with came to the music they are doing... their unique vision of music."

Though artists from Asia are well represented, Ruotan has never set restrictions in terms of genre or geography. He recently put out *Et Attendre* by Lyon duo Magrava, whose guitarist Cyril Meysson has mastered many WV Sorcerer releases. Another recent highlight is *Teufelskeller*, by the pounding free jazz with death metal drums trio of the same name recorded in Moscow in 2021. Teufelskeller saxophonist Anton Ponomarev is also central to *Aural Corrosion*, a March collaboration between his drone metal project P/O Massacre, Merzbow and Alex Buess.

The pivots can feel extreme as you move through WV Sorcerer's rapidly expanding catalogue. A forthcoming release, *Nuosu Music From Liangshan Vol 1: Mouth Harp*, is the fruit of Ruotan's friendship with Eryi Ribu, a Yi person who gained entry to remote cliffside villages in China's Sichuan province and documented traditional Nuosu language vocal and instrumental music. Being Yi himself, Eryi has compiled a rare emic document, taking its cue from the language and culture itself, of traditional Yi music in China. "So it's a really important release for the label," says Ruotan, who recently became a father but shows no sign of stopping WV Sorcerer's flow. "This one is really unique." ○

wvsorcerer.bandcamp.com

Unofficial Channels: *Doom & Gloom From The Tomb*

When YouTube user mr tambourine pulled together an hour-long assemblage charting six iterations of the drastic reimaginings Bob Dylan gave his elegiac "Key West" over the course of five months on the road from 2021–22, it was catnip to Tyler Wilcox. Dylan is one of the primary obsessions of Wilcox's Tumblr blog *Doom & Gloom From The Tomb*, where since 2009 he's been posting "a selection of rad bootlegs + other music".

Through downloads and YouTube links, the blog offers a tireless stream of Wilcox's favourite artists alongside any number of others that catch his ear on a given day. In addition to Dylan, favoured rock elders include Lou Reed, Neil Young and Richard and Linda Thompson (the page takes its name from a 1985 fan club cassette). The Feelies, Yo La Tengo, Sonic Youth and Pavement are among the rock acts from subsequent generations. There's great jazz too, with plenty of obscure tapes from Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Don Cherry. Forays into further arenas highlight everything from Philip Glass to Curtis Mayfield to early Pink Floyd. And, not content to dwell entirely in the past, Wilcox shares recommendations from his travels through newer (official) releases on Bandcamp, where he's recently tipped his hat to artists like Stella Kola and Mali Obomsawin.

The write-ups are characterised by the gusto of the diehard fan – comments on sound quality, historical anecdotes and quotes, and moments in the recordings to really look out for. It's like sitting in a room with your friend who has an especially choice bootleg collection as they bop around playing you all the great new stuff they've got lately. The tone is informal but informed. In the aforementioned Dylan post, Wilcox enthuses about an upcoming show he'll see with his brothers, gives an overview of the metamorphosis of "Key West", and provides a triple epigraph placing quotes from Thomas McGuane and Wallace Stevens against a few lines from Dylan's song. It's a concise and moving bit of writing which would be impossible in a more overtly academic context.

YouTube clips get yanked down, download links expire and the Tumblr platform which hosts the blog could itself vanish, but potential ephemerality matters little here. True obsessives can subscribe and fill up hard drives and become the bootleg specialist of their little circle. Plus, most of this stuff was never meant to be released anyway, so to have it so ardently presented, even for now, is something to celebrate. ○

doomandgloomfromthetomb.tumblr.com

Matt Krefting

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Dwight Trible

The distinctive bass-baritone's voyages into spiritual jazz, improvisation and funk reach uncharted waters

By Brian Morton
Photography by Stephen Ross Goldstein

Once Dwight Trible was thrown in at the deep end, that was always going to be his end of the pool. Trible's caramel bass baritone has been heard alongside Pharoah Sanders, Horace Tapscott, on his own spiritual jazz projects and in collaborations with younger players like Kamasi Washington and the UK's Matthew Halsall. He's more than just the voice, though: Trible has always gone deep, looking for the most creative and testing situations, positioning his work as a healing voice and a search for truth beneath the troubled surface.

He was born in Cincinnati and first worked there with Pure Essence, whose solitary single "Wake Up (Parts 1 & 2)" came out in 1976 (the 2005 reissue was reviewed by Dave Tompkins in *The Wire* 259). Trible was away from the group by then. "I'd started more of a spiritual jazz group," he recalls. "Our MC was a palmist, he was into astrology, that kind of thing. Another of the guys was..." Trible's chuckle on the line from Los Angeles sounds like a small geological readjustment as he works back through these memories, "a prophet. He could predict the future! It amazes me that we were able to play in clubs, but we did and it was a very beautiful thing."

He concedes that the following decade, with its surface sheen and its bottom line approach to pretty much everything, wasn't so open to the spiritual, but by then Trible had moved on and out West. "When I got to LA, I wanted to be where the African-American progressive music scene was, so I started out in Watts – you know, the Watts Towers, the Watts poets, the Watts coffee house." This is where his deep end moment came. "Everywhere I went, I would see posters with Horace Tapscott's name on them. I didn't know who he was, but his name was everywhere. When I finally heard him play it was so soul-shaking, finding out I knew nothing at all. My eyes were opened, but it was disturbing too."

Tapscott's Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra formed in 1961 with a strong experimental and communitarian spirit broadly similar to the AACM in Chicago but with, perhaps, more of a hint of the California apocalyptic. Trible always refers to it as The Ark, and suggests that it saved a lot of musicians from the flood of Reaganite trickledown economics and cowboy politics.

Convinced he had to start over in music, Trible was bemused to find that Tapscott wanted to meet. "'Be at my house at 3pm.' I didn't even know where he lived! I was sure he had confused me with someone else. But I found out and I got there, nervous. To put me at my ease, I guess, he pretended to be nervous too, and I began to be more assertive in learning these complicated melodies he wanted me to sing. Then he told me to turn up at this place ... I turn up, there's 30 guys there. I think maybe this is a rehearsal, but Horace says, 'Dwight, come here, man. We don't do things like that.'"

He had a similar experience with Pharoah Sanders, who offered no clue what he expected Trible to sing. He was told to ask the piano player, who told him to ask the bass player: that old routine. He asked a friend to make him a tape of all of Sanders's songs, but when he got together with the saxophonist – who flew in on the day of the gig – he didn't recognise any of it. Again, sink or swim.

Trible's vocal musicianship is that of a genuine improvisor. He's been accused of going over the top, to comic effect in one slightly patronising view of 2019's *Mothership*, but no one says that about Coltrane's altissimo squalls or Eric Dolphy's untranscribable yawps. Trible paid tribute to Tapscott on 2001's *Horace*, the beginning of a highly creative run of spiritual jazz albums that saw him launch The Life Force Trio in 2005 on Ninja Tune, and then collaborate successively with jazz pianist John Beasley and on *Inspirations* with Matthew Halsall, whose Gondwana Orchestra is a home-grown extension of the Coltranes' spirituality.

Having made *Mothership* for Gearbox, Trible was keen to try a (slightly) different direction. "I used to be very into funk music. Pure Essence was funk rock, I guess. I always wanted to do something that was... Funkadelic, with *Bitches Brew* and Weather Report elements. But with a funky delivery. I pitched it to Gearbox and they said, 'Hey, yeah, that would be cool.' I knew what sound I wanted for the band."

Bassist Andrew Gouché comes out of the gospel church with a sound transposed into funk. Trible identifies drummer Greg Paul out of The Katalyst Collective, along with Beasley again and guitarist GE Stinson, as men who share his deep-dive approach to improvisation. Kamasi Washington also has a guest spot.

The new album *Ancient Future* – a title with East/West/Third Coast resonances – is only somewhat of a departure. Trible's voice, which sounds undatable and timeless, with something of Al Hibbler, Detroit and Philly, The Last Poets and more, is the continuity. But there's a new urgency to the spirituality. Trible identifies "One Truth" as a key track, his passionate response to Donald Trump's Amerika. "That man lied every other word he spoke. He made lying fashionable. He gave everyone else permission to do it. That's not a world I want to see." Lying is a reef. The truth is the deep ocean, and that's where Dwight Trible swims, with an ancient song constantly renewed. ○

Dwight Trible's *Ancient Future* is released by Gearbox

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Alison Cotton

Drones, viola, harmonium and ghosts of Sunderland's past produce a haunted update on folk music.

By Abi Bliss
Photography by Carina Kehlet Schou

If there was anywhere to escape the heat at last August's Supernormal Festival in Oxfordshire, it was Alison Cotton's set. Not only because her performance took place in Braziers Park's aged Barn venue, whose lofty wooden beams and enticing shadowed corners offered respite from the sweltering 36° temperatures outside. Entwining layers of viola, harmonium and mostly wordless vocals, her music dimmed the sun and reached deep into the chill earth while evoking the darkness that haunts much of the British folk tradition. Even if, as she notes when we speak, she didn't take the opportunity to play her song "A Tragedy In The Tithe Barn".

"It was probably my favourite ever performance," the Sunderland raised, London based musician remembers. "There was just something about being in that barn. There's obviously a lot of history there and it was a really incredible experience."

Cotton's professed enthusiasm for gigging in the wake of last summer's album *The Portrait You Painted Of Me* is in part compensation for the Covid pandemic preventing her touring its predecessor *Only Darkness Now*. But it also reflects a growing realisation of the expansive possibilities of her solo music, after years spent playing songs in groups. At Reading University in the 1990s, she lent her strings to British Air Powers, the group now known as Sea Power, then left them to complement the synths of art-pop quartet Saloon. Later, she joined psych-folk band The Eighteenth Day Of May before forming The Left Outsides with fellow band member Mark Nicholas, now both her husband and album producer.

A clutch of releases with Michael Tanner, aka Plinth, between 2016–19 (with the addition of vibraphonist Lino Capra Vaccina for *The Blackening*) foreshadowed the direction of her solo work: spacious, improvisatory and with drones replacing the rhythmic foundations provided by bandmates, "like the canvas really, and I put other layers over the top". She adds, "But also having the drone and playing that kind of longform music, I really like the space. It's less is more. It feels really refreshing and free."

Drone there may be, but Cotton's pieces are far from static. Layers of tones shift into eerie intervals then resolve, while tiny timbral details – a squeaking fingerboard, the grain of a bow – punctuate the interweaving breath arcs of voice and harmonium. The slow vocals, instrumental mix and stately melancholy may suggest *The Marble Index*-era Nico.

"It's a huge compliment as I really like her, but to me what I'm doing is really different," Cotton says. Yet the results are more akin to Laura Cannell's bowed portraits of harsh wintry lands, the harmonies equally rooted in folk vernacular and a grainy distillation of place and history into mood. There's a similar spontaneity at work, too, with inspiration drawn as much from ambient sounds – Cotton mentions car alarms and lawnmowers – as from those in her head.

The Portrait You Painted Of Me came out of lockdown "when normally before Christmas I'd be going back to my parents in Sunderland. Every time I sat down to play, it would come into my head where I should be at that point. I was seeing myself in Sunderland but in another time, all of these images of what Sunderland used to be famous for."

Its titles evoke the Tyne and Wear region's rugged beauty and harsh industrial past, but for the most part, any narration is left to the music. "Murmurations Over The Moor" is a vocal vignette both tender and longing, while the metallic reverberations of bowed cymbal add a meditative hint of Pauline Oliveros's Deep Listening to "That Tunnel Underground Seemed Neverending".

Music again says more than words in Cotton's newest work *Engelchen*, which pays tribute to Ida and Louise Cook, Sunderland born sisters who used their love of European opera as a cover for assisting 29 Jewish refugees to flee Germany in the 1930s. "I started reading their story and I just couldn't believe that it wasn't better known," Cotton says. At first, she was desperate to track down the sisters' box of letters until she discovered they had long since been destroyed by Louise. Instead, *Engelchen*'s first performance in Sunderland featured a refugee client of local charity North East Rise reading out his own letter to his family, as well as a talk, poetry and a gramophone playing the sisters' favourite opera records. For the musical centrepiece, "We Were Smuggling People's Lives" – a nod to how the sisters concealed refugees' valuables on their person – Cotton incorporated train sounds made from sandpaper, seagull samples and an ominous martial snare to suggest the perilous journeys made.

Cotton hopes to repeat the performance elsewhere as well as including *Engelchen*'s music on her next album, which will more fully explore the Cooks' lives. Having created the work, she keenly feels the need to do justice to the pair's story. "It was obvious that was a huge guilt that they had about those who they didn't manage to help," she says. "So as well as the people they did save, I wanted to do it in memory of those who they didn't. I hope that's what they would have wanted." ○

Alison Cotton's *The Portrait You Painted Of Me* is released by Rocket Recordings

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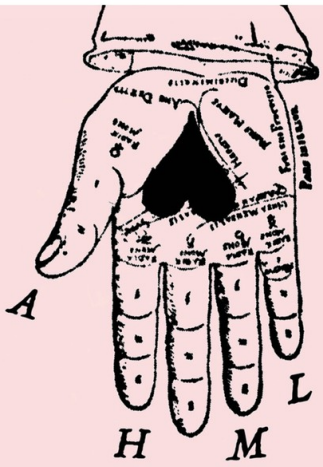

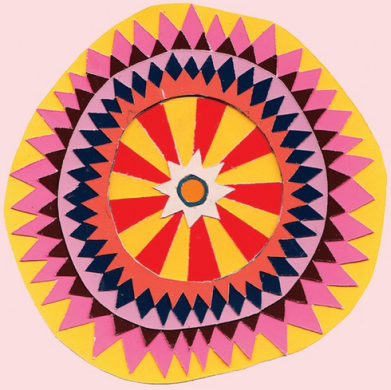

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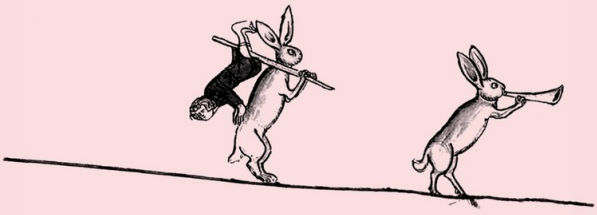

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PoiL Ueda

Traditional Japanese satsuma-biwa playing and Buddhist chants find a surprising congruence with prog freakouts

By JR Moores

PoiL Ueda: (from left) Junko Ueda, Guilhem Meier, Benoit Lecomte, Antoine Arnera, Boris Cassone

On paper it doesn't seem the likeliest partnership. In one corner of the musical world is Junko Ueda, who specialises in the ancient Japanese arts of acoustic satsuma-biwa playing, epic storytelling and Buddhist chants. Then there is PoiL from Lyon, known for their loudly amplified, bass-heavy and hyperactive prog rock in the more (post)modern lineage of Guapo and Mr Bungle.

Ueda was surprised when back in 2018 she received what's remembered as a "very polite email" from PoiL keyboardist Antoine Arnera. Curious to hear what she was being asked to participate in, she clicked on the link to PoiL's music. "And what I heard was a mass of power and energy," she says, "virtuoso rock music but avant garde and very fast." At first it seemed totally at odds with her own discipline. "What do I do with this?" she asked herself. "My music has a lot of silence. It is very formal and traditional."

She detected some kind of shared spirit, however, and impulsively signed up. Thus PoiL Ueda was born. After sharing ideas and rehearsing remotely through lockdown, the five musicians met in person to thrash out their self-titled debut album in a week-long frenzy. Arnera enjoyed the deadline constraint because it left little time to fret about whether the collaboration was actually working or where lay the boundaries between the ancient and contemporary.

The result should not be considered a "fusion", he insists. Rather, "It's like we have Junko's voice and her biwa floating in the air and our music whooshing around it. The voice of Junko is very sobriété [sober], without many changes, and our music is quite the opposite. We tried to change the colours of the music and compose our patterns while respecting the melodies, keeping all the tempo, and maybe the ma."

"Ma [間] is the most important essence in Japanese traditional music," explains Ueda. "It is like timing, but it also means space. In the traditional Japanese musical score, there is no indication about rhythm and timing. You have to learn this from oral tradition and from your teacher by listening only. After you repeat something a thousand times and you get more experienced, you build up this ma timing. You can be a virtuoso or a beautiful singer but if this ma is not correct, it doesn't work. I felt the PoiL members immediately understood this. They didn't break this ma in my music. This is why I fitted quickly and naturally into their music."

The LP consists of two multipart pieces. "Kujô Shakujô" is built around a 1200 year old shômyô chant. It honours the shakujô, a percussive instrument with metal rings attached to the top of a stick. Monks would carry this into the mountains when completing their training to ward off dangerous animals and expel their own internal bad spirits. PoiL Ueda use it to open all of their concerts.

"Dan No Ura" derives from the *Heike Monogatari*, an epic tale which recounts the 12th century power struggle between the ruling aristocratic Heike clan and – spoiler alert – the eventually victorious Genji samurai. "Yes, we had quite the same history," says Arnera when contemplating the parallels with certain events in his own country's past. "Not with samurai, but a similar resistance from the people. Maybe in every part of the world we have the same kinds of stories concerning power, no? We are still manifesting, this time against Macron."

He is speaking on the same day Bordeaux's city hall was set ablaze in protest at the French government's planned rise in the pension age. "For me it feels like despotism. He wants to make some laws. The people don't want them but they do it anyway. They can do what they want because it's like there is a black hole in the legislation. We have to change it. But I don't know if that will be possible."

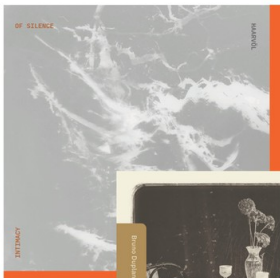
Perhaps hope can be found in the moral of the *Heike Monogatari*: everything in life is impermanent and no power is eternal.

PoiL Ueda remain a going concern with plenty of tour dates lined up and future albums planned. "I am very happy because there is a new audience I would never have met without this project," Ueda says of performing to the kind of avant rock fans more usually found weighing up the different eras of King Crimson or passionately debating the best Primus side project. She's had to get used to working with amplifier stacks and ear monitors, while PoiL have curtailed some of their wackier tendencies. "It is the first time we have not used much humour in our concerts because the subject matter of the music is more serious and we don't want to jump around wildly," notes Arnera. That said, neither party believes they have compromised anything.

"It's two worlds together," concludes Ueda. "I've always thought that tradition should not happen behind closed doors. The traditional should have the desire to contribute to the society not of the past, not in the museum, but of this moment. I think that is very important." ○

PoiL Ueda's *PoiL Ueda* is released by Dur Et Doux

Paul Bourdrel



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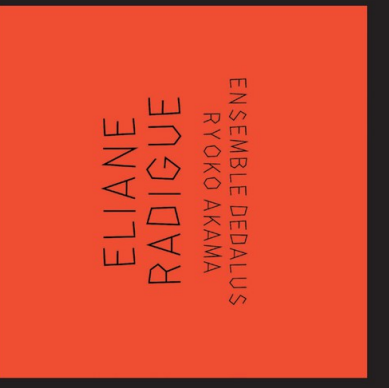

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Global Ear: Ho Chi Minh City

A wild weekend of club culture in Vietnam's largest city reveals a scene making connections on the global electronic network

By Mike Steyels

When I landed in Ho Chi Minh City (the former South Vietnamese capital Saigon) and my motorcycle pulled off into the dense afternoon traffic and heat, I still wasn't sure of my itinerary. But I knew it would be fun. I start my trip with a night at Arcan, a warehouse space with black walls, nitrous balloons in the crowd, and a smokers welcome policy.

When I pull up to the spot, I realise this is not the event I expected, but it turns out even better. Local DJ Larria holds down the decks first, spinning a UK-centred set spanning everything from remixes of grime classic "Pow! (Forward)" by Lethal Bizzle to Bronx drillista Ice Spice. Larria is well known for his expansive interest in global club music, spinning and producing everything from Jersey club and baile funk mixed with V-pop and local dance music style vinahouse.

His friends are on stage next to him, dropping the occasional bar on the mic and taking phone camera shots of him in his wrap-around shades and vintage white windbreaker. At 25 years old, Larria is young but has a head start on much of the scene in the city. "My parents sold bootleg CDs from our house, so I had early access to everything – I was listening to Tupac in first grade," he laughs. As a teenager, he DJed vinahouse for his local hiphop dance crew. Soon he was using SoundCloud to discover dance music from around the world.

The UK selections tonight are intended to introduce East London's Elijah, formerly of the Butterz crew, making his first trip to Asia. He plays a familiar range of everything from grime to two-step garage and bassline to a crowd with a few more expats than usual. After his set, they take a pause to preview a new music video directed by Vân Anh, who handles visual design for Arcan and is also a DJ with her own regular LGBTQ party Gái Nhảy.

Across town, Teddy Chilla rocks the crowd on the rooftop at Piu Piu, which usually has an upscale hiphop vibe, but they're loosening the rules for his set of uptempo trap, UK club and reggae tracks. Chilla is only 33, but in the youth-driven scene of Vietnam, that makes him something of an elder. He credits the kids for pushing the scene forward: "A lot of the friends I started with have stopped clubbing. But the younger crowd want to listen to something new."

The next day, I groggily make my way to an early event at Arcan where Elijah is giving a lecture as part of a tour discussing the economics of underground creative scenes. It's quiet but all the seats are full and nearly everyone raises their hands with a question. At one point, he asks if this is the first time we've been to a lecture in a club, and the audience nod. The turnout and engagement prove the scene is thinking strategically about how to build what comes next.

Later that night, when the lights dim and fog spills onto the floor, Tri Minh treats the crowd to a set of live hard techno. In town from Hanoi, he performs with stacks of controllers connected by metres of wires. He programmes and plays loops and melodies, steadily pounding the space with four on the floor debauchery. His set features almost no trace of Vietnamese influence, something he says he's battled with for years. "I started to recognise a kind of racism, where people expected an Asian electronic musician to play with some kind of traditional music," he says. Some of his recordings have mimicked the scales, notes, and flavours of Vietnamese genres in unexpected ways to avoid the label of an Asian artist.

Downstairs I find Nodey, whose music is some of the most notable and adventurous electronic music coming out of the country, lounging on a couch, chilling. He's Viet kiêu (Vietnamese from overseas), was born and raised in Paris, and his music blends Viet influences with big beats and crisp design. "I'd be making rap beats for 90s French guys, blending Vietnamese sounds into my beats," he says proudly.

For my last day, I take a trip to Nodey's studio in a faux colonial house in a quiet residential part of town. The white and wooden interior is littered with Viet instruments in various states of repair. Zach Sch, who was born in the US but grew up in Vietnam and is a member of the amorphous Rắn Cạp Đuôi collective, is putting the final touches on his album for the local Nhạc Gãy label melding IDM, rap beats, drones, soundscapes, and global instrumentation. "I like how he blends the local influences very naturally and purposefully; it's not gimmicky at all," says Anh Phi Trần, a cofounder of Nhạc Gãy who's sitting in for the session.

Sch also helps organise shows including the recent Nusasonic event, which brought dozens of electronic artists together from all over South East Asia for a two day mini-festival in the city. He tells me that the crowd was almost entirely local – thanks to publishing the PR material primarily in Vietnamese – which in his eyes is good for the scene. "I'm really happy with the event and think it proves that Saigon can support weird shit now," he says. "Enough people will come out and really enjoy it. Three or four years ago, that really wasn't the case."

One of Elijah's trademark yellow Post-it note motivational images stresses the range of talents which are needed for a creative ecosystem. It reads: "Artists+Producers+DJs+Platforms +Managers +Promoters=Scene." Although the underground electronic community is still small here, it's active in many of the things that count to make a scene grow sustainably. It's a fast-growing, youth-driven moment that's unlikely to slow down anytime soon. ○

Larria DJing at Arcan, Ho Chi Minh City

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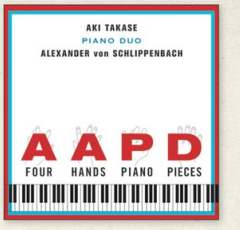

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This month's artwork selected by Regis
Album design by Chris Bigg

The Wolfgang Press
Bird Wood Cage
4AD 1988

It's my belief that what's interesting about dance music, perhaps one of the only qualities that drew me to it, was that it completely broke the structure of rock 'n' roll. It's fair to say that the design of 4AD albums achieved the same, by liberating the LP sleeve from the limitations of tradition and cliche. Although my total devotion was reserved for Mute and Some Bizzare in the early to mid-1980s, 4AD was always there, very much admired on the periphery.

The sleeve for The Wolfgang Press's *Bird Wood Cage* always stood out as powerful, just as the band sounded powerful every time I saw them live. When the group's Andrew Gray informed the in-house design team that he intended the cover to depict a toilet, young assistant Chris Bigg was tasked with making this a reality. Head designer Vaughan Oliver was never known to shy away from an outlandish, even vulgar, gesture, but this proved too much even for him.

The Wolfgang Press had always bucked against the gauzy, ethereal look that many 4AD sleeves were given, and in 1988 Bigg was happy to help usher in a new era in which the label could shed some of those associations. He and the group set out to find a suitable toilet, an activity absurd enough as to warrant accolades on its own. When they stumbled upon the model depicted, they had to bring it out behind the shop they found it in and photograph it there and then, the budget for the project being nil. Gray completed the package concept by offering a photograph of his kitchen for the back cover, hardly the sort of imagery expected from a label known for breathtaking abstractions. All my favourite art has been born out of a need to provoke, and The Wolfgang Press were clearly trying to challenge people's comfort zones.

Over lockdown I bonded with my friend Jim Siegel, a musician based in New York, when we realised we shared a love of this record, along with a belief that The Wolfgang Press are massively underrated. A lifelong obsessive about 4AD's independent era under Ivo Watts-Russell, Jim himself longed to create music that reflected the full scope of his musical interests beyond being a drummer. As the parent of a US citizen, I was permitted to travel to New York on nearly empty transatlantic flights throughout the early days of Covid restrictions. I'd stay at Jim's apartment where we collaborated together in pursuit of his ideas.

The recordings resulted in the Vivid Oblivion album *The Graphic Cabinet*, and Jim's love for the 4AD visual aesthetic led him to ask Chris Bigg to design the sleeve for it. Working on the project energised me, and I think the process of refining sleeve details with Jim did the same for Bigg.

Jim visited London in late 2022 and we stopped by the deconsecrated All Hallows church in Southwark, which had once housed Blackwing Studios, where so many of our favourite Mute and 4AD records were made. He went on to Brighton and met up with Chris Bigg. "There's a lot of my DNA in that pub," Bigg said as they parted ways. There's a lot of his DNA in some of the most visionary record sleeves in independent music history, too. ○

Karl O'Connor aka Regis is the head of Downwards Records. *Spasms And Savagery (30 Years Of Downwards)* and Vivid Oblivion's *The Graphic Cabinet* are released by Downwards. An anniversary event, Spasms And Savagery (30 Years Of Downwards), takes place at Birmingham's Centrala on 10 June

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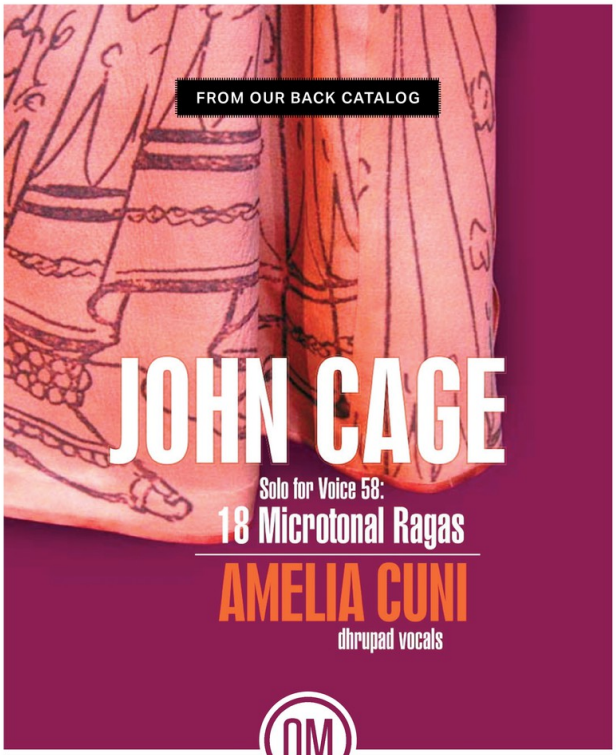

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Each month we play an artist or group a series of records which they are asked to comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they are about to hear

Tested by Laina Dawes
Photography by J Houston

Laura Ortman is a White Mountain Apache musician, born in Whiteriver, Arizona and based in New York since 1997. A violinist and experimental composer, her work ranges across live performances, soundtracks for film and live media, visual art and field recording, and she interweaves her heritage within her practice, often in collaboration with other artists and associates.

In 2008, she formed The Coast Orchestra, an all-Indigenous ensemble who performed a live soundtrack to Edward Curtis's 1914 silent film *In The Land Of The Head Hunters*. Around this time, she received a First Nations Composers Initiative Grant. Through the 2010s she released via Bandcamp an extensive selection of recordings including soundtracks and live performances, ranging across violin, keyboard, amplified piano, electric guitar, whistles, percussion and small instruments. She has recently finished recording a new album produced by New York alt rock auteur Martin Bisi, who also worked with her on 2017's *My Soul Remainer*.

Around the time of the pandemic she increasingly incorporated field recordings and site-specific events into her work, including a performance at Socrates Sculpture Park in New York, and an entry in Issue Project Room's Isolated Field Recording series. Recent years have seen her collaborate and perform widely, including with Diné (Navajo) musician and composer Raven Chacon. Her live appearances have ranged from European festivals to New York's regular noise jamboree Ende Tymes. Before the interview she showed off her range of instruments including her Apache violin, a solo instrument designed to be held against the chest so it reverberates off the breastbone.

The jukebox took place in New York.

Buffy Sainte-Marie
"God Is Alive, Magic Is Afoot"
From *Illuminations* (Vanguard) 1969

LO Thanks for playing that. Buffy has always been there for me, and I've seen and have met her many times. I have this album, and it's cool because I have it on my crazy stereo here, and it always reverberates with lots of determination. Beauty, you know. But it resolves into its own twirling language. It makes me feel really good, as it's such a powerful, special song.

Two summers ago, I got struck with the bad Delta case of Covid. It struck me down hard, and I was really sick. I live alone, so I quarantined alone, and it was very difficult. By the time my doctor cleared me to get back to work, I was a week late in going to this five-week artist residency in Cassis, France at the Camargo Foundation. But the night before I left, I hobbled over to Prospect Park because Buffy was playing in Brooklyn for the first time. I was still so weak from Covid, and it took me, like, over an hour to walk there, but it was so important to catch one of my heroes just right here in my backyard. She has always been special to me, there's so much to be learned from Buffy.

LD **When did you first pick up the violin?**

LO When I was seven. I've been playing it for over 40 years now. It's beautiful. I've always enjoyed the violin. Even just playing long tones, the open strings. I can still get a lot of information out of that.

LD **What kind of music were you listening to when you were a kid, or during your formative years as a teenager?**

LO Just the music that everybody else is listening to in their teens. Pop and rock, early hiphop. Classical music ... it's always been with me, like the back of my hand. And then when all your friends start joining bands, people start making really interesting music and creating wonderful sounds for their projects. Listening to the music my friends were making opened a whole new world for me.

The Velvet Underground
"Venus In Furs"
From *The Velvet Underground & Nico* (Verve) 1967

LO I just saw [saxophonist] Steve Gorn play this weekend. He's put together this ensemble of all New York based musicians, and I'm included on that. We are covering that album, the first with [singer] Nico. We're going to rehearse this summer, and then we're going over to Pittsburgh to the Andy Warhol Museum in September, and we're going to play the whole album live. I get super excited because as a violinist, playing with others creates this chemistry, and coupled with recreating that wonderful album, it's going to be fun.

LD **What do you think the role is of the viola on this particular song?**

LO It's part of the conversation...? I think it's a beautiful tie between all the atmospheres and the dirt, the grittiness. I love it. It's beautiful.

LD **What was New York City like when you first moved here?**

LO That was in 1997. I moved here on April Fool's Day. And I think I went straight down to Red Hook, Brooklyn, to Sunny's Saloon, and met up with friends I knew before I moved here. One of my first jobs was at a health food store in the West Village and I used to package bulk foods like nuts and cereals and granolas – this was so early on, when I was very young. One day I was putting the granolas on the shelf, and this guy came in and asked me, 'What kind of granola should I get?' I look up and it's Lou Reed. I'm just like, um, what? I was just so amazed. I was so lucky to be at the right place at the right time and having the right job where you can actually have a funny conversation with Lou Reed. I instantly got sweaty hands and just started stumbling. I was like, 'Well, how do you like your granola to stay? Crunchy or you like it to get soft?' And he said, 'I guess, crunchy'. I was like, [you] might like Honey Nuts. It was so wonderful being in New York, feeling the energy and meeting these legends, as well as meeting legends in the making. I was doing whatever I could to go and hear music, see art and just being clueless. It was about a community where everyone's kind of like wanting to go around and do the same thing.

New York is where I first started working and interacting with other Indigenous peoples from around the country and that was groundbreaking for my world, especially for what I do creatively. The American Indian Community House in the East Village is where I met tons of friends and mentors, and we were like a family... having my first concerts there and art shows, and before you know it it's 20, 23 years later and here we are. I still run around like crazy. I keep my job as a hair stylist and I work one day a week, in the Lower East Side. Among all the crazy music stuff I do, it just helps keep me grounded in New York, to have a constant, and it's something that I can do to help people feel better. I like having that tie with people, and the constant interaction I have with people that I work with. I'm still in the same apartment that I moved into in 1997 – I must love it here!

The Revolutionary Ensemble
"New York"
From *The People's Republic* (Horizon) 1976

LO Whenever I hear the violin, you know, it's just like... the same language. This track reminds me of the trio In Defense Of Memory

that I play with, with Marshall Trammell on drums and my friend Carlos Santistevan on upright bass. We have an album that's going to come out soon, and our purpose and delivery is to open borders and create like a continuous dialogue with sound. It's about aspects of your music holding responsibility for social empowerment and relationships to one another. So, this track just draws me straight to those kinds of aspects of the possibilities of music, which I enjoy a lot.

As you were playing this, I was writing down similar veins of music that I've worked with, like I used to play in this kind of free jazz collective called 12 Houses with Matt Lavelle. He would give us stems and scores and stuff to improvise off. So that's how I started more of my improvisational work, through free jazz, improvising with modern dancers and poets and theatre. And then suddenly before I knew it, I was recording all these improvised passages and then I was listening back to them, getting to know these passages that I liked, and ones that I needed to learn like the back of my hand.

I'm an incessant recorder of my rehearsals. Back then, I used a four-track all the time. But yeah, I love working with other string players, and of course playing with drummers is one of my favourite things in the world.

LD **Is there a similar level of engagement in relation to the emotion that you are conveying through your musical or your visual art practice?**

LO Yes, this is absolutely something I apply through creating my albums, collaborations, film soundtracks, sound pieces, but especially in my live performance practice. Once I find out about an upcoming gig, I consider who my audience is, where I'm playing, the occasion, and what's really going on: like, what's going on around me? I customise each set for all of that. I select passages that I want to be part of my dialogue and I put my whole body into it, my whole mindset to the point where my body takes over, which I enjoy. I enjoy that because I have something I would like to chime in on. I want to be part of something that is bigger than me.

I played my first live show after Covid along New York's East River In the middle of the summer in 2020. It was on top of this big piece by the artist Jeffrey Gibson at Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens. It was one of the most outstanding sets and audiences I've ever experienced, because it was a closed audience, except for these Indigenous artists and friends that I know. I was seeing the skyline and was happy and feeling so alive, surrounded by my sisters. I had never played like that before. And of course, it comes out in the music: the joy, the love, the place. I think about playing to the middle of the ocean, or to the creatures at the bottom of the ocean, or to play music about the melting icebergs. It's all kind of like that. It's always customised. What's going on? That's a great question.

Raven Chacon
"Study For Human-Made Bird Calls And Microphone Out A Moving Car Window"
From *An Anthology Of Chants Operations* (Ouidah) 2020

LO This reminds me of the Buffy Saint-Marie track. I can get that same kind of energy, or tendencies, or, I don't know, just the same kind of qualities. The shimmer. I love it. Yeah. A lot of bird noises you can hear in the background, which I thought was interesting.

Raven is one of my earliest, longest time collaborators. I don't know how many tapes we have of our recordings that no-one has ever heard, which is exciting because some things are just meant for just the time it was performed, without the public hearing them. Like how those birds are probably like, 'hey, back off.' But yeah, he has all these ways of recording have always captured my ear. It's cool that what Raven did with this piece [blending performance and field recording] because it reminds me of early recordings I did here in my apartment, because I live on Flatbush Avenue, which is one of the noisiest streets in Brooklyn as far as I'm concerned.

When I first started out, I was recording really nice, soft, gentle violin recordings and singing, but you'd always hear traffic and sirens and people yelling and stuff on Flatbush Avenue. Those sounds always ended up in my releases and at first it bothered me, and then after like a couple of years, it became part of my sound. That's how I started diving into more field recordings as well. I was just recording everything, too. Now I have a music studio up in Greenpoint [in Brooklyn] which is nice. I go there all the time. It's a lot more soundproofed, so if I want to add more background noise, I have to figure it out with my scrapes and accidents on the violin.

Bruce Langhorne
"Ending"
From *The Hired Hand OST* (Scissor Tail) 2012, rec 1971

LO I was chosen to do a cover of this [on 2017's *The Hired Hands: A Tribute To Bruce Langhorne*] and it's from the whole soundtrack or album. It's funny, I just heard this. I was in Norway and they played it on a stereo in a bar I was in. I was like, this sounds familiar. Who is this? And it was me! I was told this is my only song on Spotify. I was like, OK, cool, I guess that'll work!

When I was listening to this, it was along the same lines of [another of Ortman's soundtracks] *In The Land Of The Headhunters*, where I'm hoping to find that kind of quality where you can make music for the moving image. I have a small collective with my friends Nanobah Becker and Jock Soto. They're both Diné (Navajo), and we have two big video projects where they're the moving image, they're the director and the dancer. Jock was principal dancer at the New York City Ballet. He's a legend and beautiful. I do all the music for their film work together, the atmosphere of the sound for the moving image. So, it's happening, but on a really small scale. So, yeah, I would like to keep that going.

With each new album, Jock chooses one of the pieces from the album that stands out to him. And then we just go for that. With this new album that's coming out, he's going to listen and we're going to do our third and probably maybe final video collaboration together. I guess sometimes when you set your mind on three, like there's kind of one for each of us, you know? It's sweet that way.

I like the commonalities with all these pieces of music we're listening to. With that track I'm thinking of the visual, like the Buffy track and the Raven one. All these pieces have a really nice unison. I was friends with [musician and film maker] Tony Conrad. This reminded me of his work, his beautiful, simple drones, like in and out of consciousness. Touch, you know. Tactile-ness. Atmospheres and static.

LD **Did you put together The Coast Orchestra? I know you had previously worked on a film soundtrack.**

LO The Coast Orchestra was created in order to work on a live soundtrack of this old film by the photographer Edward Curtis, *In The Land Of The Head Hunters*. I think it got refurbished and they found the original score, so they wanted live music for when the film screened in various cities. The organisers wanted an ensemble in every city to help present the score to the film, so they asked me to put together an ensemble [for the New York screening] because the story centres on the Kwakwaka'wakw tribe, and it's an all-Indigenous cast. It's important to have an Indigenous group play for what's going on in

© Spencer Yeh

Peter Gannushkin

the film and it's also a reclamation, interacting and giving sound and face to us.

So back in MySpace days, I put out an open call for more classically trained musicians because they did have the original score that I kind of followed. We had conductor, string section, winds and timpani, and drums and singers. It was amazing. We opened at the Margaret Mead Film Festival at the American Museum of Natural History, and it was massive, sold out... I'm sure we will resurface at some point. But what I'm hoping for, I think what we're all hoping for, is to find a new film by an Indigenous filmmaker. Maybe a silent film, maybe another silent film where we can do the score.

C Spencer Yeh
"Oakland CA April 3rd"
From *Solo Violin West Coast USA* 2017 (Bandcamp) 2020

LO C Spencer Yeh? I just saw him play a couple of weeks ago before I went to Norway. I mean, I've seen him play a bunch. He's a good friend of mine. I know he does stuff with voice too, and he has a huge practice. I met him through other musicians and stuff, but then we got to work together when we were doing this big piece with Tony [Conrad]. Playing together with Tony and then all these chemistries of different string players helped me draw an alternative reality to classical music. That world of the violin really inspires me, as I can hear all these other aspects of string instruments. I would love to do a violin ensemble in New York. Of all the crazy violinists that I know here, I love Samara Lubelski.

I think there's so many possibilities with this instrument as far as the sonic capabilities. I like to play my violin so it gives off tiny particles of the rosin from the violin strings, which creates this grittiness and these little sparks. Creating too much grit within the sound, so it gets emotive. Visually, it gives off plumes of smoke when you really dig in and it creates even more atmosphere when I perform.

LD **After so many years of playing the violin, do you ever feel tired? Listening to you speak, it seems like you are always seeking and finding inspiration. What keeps you still wanting to explore and discover new ways of music making through playing your instrument?**

LO There's just this ongoing hope for balance, you know, having inspiration. Collaboration is key. Keeping other voices within your ideas and playing with others is always a huge part of what I do. I get excited. This year I have a smaller amount of collaboration projects, but they involve more time so we can build more of a sound together. Last year I took on way too much, but it was great. But yeah, I'm working on an opera. I'm working on a string quartet for the first time. I'm going to do The Velvet Underground thing. I'm doing a big collaboration with other musicians and stuff for this big installation at Mass MoCA with Jeffrey Gibson.

I just bought a camera so I can start making my own videos for projections. I can start taking my visual side another step further than just the audio. I take a lot of photographs anyway, so it was time. I've only had my camera for less than a month, but I'm already dreaming about it, I'm thinking about eventually having a photo show, and then I can do a soundtrack for the photo show or... yes, I'm always thinking of new ways to approach music and art. It's just always been part of me, too.

I'm still discovering stuff about myself. I don't even know if it is stuff like Covid that brought me new energy or even more despair. I can't tell the difference because my career has always had that balance.

Martin Bisi

Unknown artist
"子守歌"
From *Music Of Ainus* (Seven Seas) 1974

LO Oh, the vocals!

LD **This is from some Indigenous musicians, recorded in the 1970s in the northern Hokkaido region, and originally released in Japan. I'm teaching Japanese folk music to students at Columbia University now, so I'm personally stoked to play this track.**

LO I wonder what they were singing about in this piece. I had just recently seen Cecilia Vicuna, the poet, perform recently, and she sang her poetry in a singing voice like that. It was like saying her whole poetry while giving quotes from a book she was reading from. It was really effective. It was beautiful. I wonder what they were singing about in this piece? It also reminds me of Buffy's vocals.

All over the world there are Indigenous people and that makes me feel happy, really grounded. I've always been waiting for this kind of feeling of the connection. Where when you're younger, you just feel. Do we matter? Even though you hear it from your family, you're just looking for the bigger picture. So yeah, working in music and the arts and humanities and learning about the bigger picture with Indigenous people everywhere. Something to sing about.

Unsane
"Organ Donor"
From *Unsane* (Matador) 1991

LO That is [producer] Martin Bisi. I've recorded all my solo albums with him. I just finished mixing my fourth one with him. He's right over here in Gowanus [Brooklyn] and he has this big, giant, cavernous studio. I wrote to him very early on, I think, on his website: 'Hi, I'm a violinist, just a solo violinist. I have friends that work with you. I've looked at pictures of your studio, and I can just picture the lone violin and these massive caves and go from there.' He's helped me co-produce. Even in that song there you can hear like the megaphone or something, and I sing through megaphones. That's totally his sound.

We have this great chemistry where we can almost read each other's mind. We do lots of talking and we work pretty fast. But we also are talking about non-music, non-sound stuff, talking about the world around us. Lots of talks about Indigenous people, which always warms my heart! I totally trust him, and I love what he's done for my work. I take on a lot of the work on my own, maybe too much because I play all the instruments on the albums. I feel like it's a really great relationship for the sound that comes out.

LD **As a New York based artist, would you consider yourself lucky? Because you seem to have made some deep and long lasting connections with people here. And from talking to other musicians who live here, that hasn't always been the case.**

LO I know I'm not lucky. I just think I feel a sense of purpose. You know, one reason why I moved here was for art and music, but I feel a sense of survival too, for the sound and the way I approach making things happen. Because you want to have a sense of belonging. I want to tie in my sound with my body with the Apache family and tribe. With heartbreak, with wisdom of getting through. So I try to be optimistic and keep open to as many opportunities as much as I can. It's not always easy when you're alone, so when you get to play well with others, it does open my perspective.

I'm interested in creating a better experience, not just for me, but for everyone that I'm working with. I think about the records and recordings I have done, as well as photographs and I'm just like, you're still living, you're still continuing. And that's a great place to be. ○

Michael Yung

Lucciano Maggiore at home, London, March 2023

Luciano Maggiore

Drawing on the legacies of Fluxus and arte povera, the performance artist's work explores the awkwardness and absurdity of everyday life

By Edward Henderson
Photography by Dora Mois

Everything in Flux

On Walthamstow Marshes in North East London, two black umbrellas about ten metres apart are just about visible, nestled in the long grass. Crouched underneath are two performers rubbing knives together. Like Beckettian crickets, they produce a metallic scratching sound. The performers are Luciano Maggiore and Louise Le Du. As with a lot of Maggiore's work, the performance is simultaneously straightforward and opaquely illegible. Knives are obviously a potent symbol, but rubbing them together? Doesn't that blunt them? The umbrellas seem absurd, but they are outside and later it starts to rain, so maybe not. Asking Maggiore about the piece doesn't unravel the mystery: "Louise likes umbrellas," he responds. However he does reveal that the piece is a nod to Italian experimentalist Walter Marchetti, whose *Per La Mano Sinistra* involves the pianist holding up an open umbrella throughout, limiting the piano playing to one hand.

Maggiore started working as an artist/musician when he was a student of fine art in Bologna in 2000. His early work referenced absurdist theatre and Italian art movements such as arte povera. He tells me about a 2004 piece, *Fixed*, where he got a fake train company handyman to glue his shoes to the floor of Bologna train station. These days, he frequently collaborates with Louie Rice, to whom he was introduced to by a mutual friend when he moved to London in 2015. Their first piece together was *Skirting* (2017) which instructs the performers to "walk the entire perimeter of a space kicking the wall with your left or right foot. Repeat as necessary if the space is small, an extended duration is important."

They organised a series of concerts in London's Cafe Oto Project Space: "The absence of a PA inside the venue gave name to the series and became an essential working rule, NOPA (at least in the beginning)," he says. "We started performing other people's scores. And the very first event was an actualisation of Walter Marchetti's *La Caccia*, and this was followed by other events where we performed Fluxus scores or some more 'classical' experimental music scores."

How do they choose which pieces to perform? "I would say that all the pieces we performed in those years had in common a dryness, or better, an absence of romanticism – a quality that characterises our work together," he replies. In *Coring*, they jump up and down with their hands in their pockets for ten minutes. They released an audio recording of this piece on their album *NO PA ON 2*. Their Bandcamp description of the album is "two people in a room doing something", which seems about right. The recording is pleasingly low key, a bit like a field recording; alongside the sound of their feet on the floor you can hear trains and cars going by in the background.

In a video of another collaboration, Maggiore and Rice move around a dark space with a standing audience. They are wearing reflective jackets with the hoods up and are illuminated by flashing phones on the end of selfie sticks. For some reason, they keep twitching their shoulders, making them look like pissed off Deliveroo drivers on a wet night. After some time scraping about with chairs they take their jackets off and roam through the audience making hissing sounds. They both have shaved heads and are wearing black T-shirts; they have the threatening machismo of nightclub security looking for someone to chuck out of the club. I ask him about the confrontational dynamics in his work. "I like the idea of reducing the distance between the source of a sound and the receiving audience," he says. "I started investigating it while I was still living in Italy, moving speakers, objects or playback devices very close to people. Proximity tilts the idea of stage, diverting the attention of the whole room to a single person. The person who is very close to the source becomes the thing to look at. But something else happens to that person: they develop a very narrow focus on the sound in order to avoid the gaze of the people around them, who usually laugh or feel intimidated knowing that they will probably be the next person in that position."

In March, Maggiore participated in a set of performances of Alison Knowles's 1960s event score pieces at Cafe Oto, including the squelchtastic *Nivea Cream Piece*. For Maggiore, who doesn't read music or play an instrument, Fluxus provides a way into being a musician. "My concerns are music concerns. I think about my work in terms of pitch, volume, spatiality and duration, but also stage presence and listening experience... Fluxus gave me a direction in my twenties for what can be done in art in the absence of technique and virtuosity," he says, adding that the "rigorous simplicity [of Fluxus] had a strong effect on my younger self".

Like punk, Fluxus is a kind of broom – it clears away the old accumulated crap of romanticism, modernism, virtuosity, theatre and artifice. It shovels away the relics of the canon so you have some space to work. But it isn't an artistic destination: the Fluxus artists didn't stay in their lofts for long. By the 70s Nam June Paik was piling televisions on top of each other to make a maximalist visual and aural cacophony. In the 80s Joseph Beuys was planting 7000 oak trees in Kassel. Alison Knowles in 2008 followed her famous instruction from 1962, "make a salad", and made a giant one on a huge tarpaulin in the Turbine Hall of London's Tate Modern. What would Maggiore do if he were given a £1,000,000 budget to make a piece? "Wow, this is difficult! I would ask for the deadline and do the same thing I do for every piece. Sit down and try to delineate the world of the work that I want to see, to listen to. Little by little. Then a lot of running (like proper running) to have it settled. It would probably be something quite simple at first glance. No helicopters or things like that."

Just as the everyday is everywhere in Maggiore's performance work, he sees performance in the everyday. "I see the place where I came from, Sicily, as a massive starting point for my work. Travelling not far, you could find yourself in front of traditional celebrations that could blow your minds as the best pieces you have ever witnessed." And although Fluxus is clearly important to him, he rejects interpretations of his work that only contextualise it in terms of the history of art and performance. "It's also reductive to think of performance art as a continuation of a movement from the 60s. It's like ignoring human culture in toto... let's take a Muay Thai fight, for example, a match between two fighters is staged in a square ring where before the fight the two fighters after a blessing from their coaches perform a dance. The fight is accompanied by traditional improvised music that responds to the movement of the fighters and the intensity of the match. We are witnessing a massive happening that has been staged in this form for I don't know how many hundred years." ○

Luciano Maggiore and Louie Rice perform in Leeds and Nottingham this month
hideousreplica.co.uk/no-pa-on

Fire Down Bellow

Paul Dunmall

Free music's most underrated reedist learned from Johnny 'Guitar' Watson and Alice Coltrane to become the bagpipe playing, woodcut crafting wildcard of the UK scene

By Clive Bell
Photography by Clare Hewitt

"I love this place," sighs Paul Dunmall. We're inside his house in the tiny village of Leigh, 20 minutes drive west of Worcester in the English Midlands. I've painfully negotiated a wasteland of cancelled and collapsed trains that would make TS Eliot proud in order to be here and discuss Dunmall's upcoming 70th birthday celebrations face to face. There's five and a half decades of tenor sax shenanigans to consider, from full-on free jazz paint-stripping to passionately meditative free improv, via a personal mission to rewrite the bagpipes playbook.

The living room looks straight out onto green fields, where a picturesque March snowfall is stirring up the chilly air. He's affectionately referring to the Worcestershire countryside all around us, where he's lived with his wife for 40 years. The room is cosy, with brightly coloured prints on the walls, many of them Dunmall's own work. This is proper countryside, but the only dogs are a cute pair of toys squashed into a basket, so I can finally relax.

Dunmall waxes less enthusiastic about the place where he was born in 1953 – Welling, originally in Kent, later submerged into Greater London. "One of the armpits of the world," he laughs. Bexleyheath next door was the posh part. His father was from Mick Jagger's Dartford, which Dunmall recalls as a village with beautiful heathland, swiftly ruined in the 1970s by building all over it. The young Dunmall felt that school, apart from art, was a waste of time, and by the age of 15 he was out performing every weekend with a soul band called Element Of Truth. He was a clarinettist who did a paper round to earn enough money to buy an alto saxophone, but the alto was quickly swapped for a tenor when the soul band indicated they'd prefer the lower pitched horn.

"We played all over the place, the Whiskey-A-Go-Go, Samantha's, and in Kilburn pubs where the skinheads piled in, getting their heads cracked. It was terrifying." Dunmall's memories, like those of Jah Wobble, reek of a rough, old, working class London. He recalls a month-long residency in an unlicensed drinking den run by the boxer Terry Downes. Gangsters liked to drink there, and rumour told of a couple of bodies being found down the alleyway. "I was talking to [flute player] Neil Metcalfe about that place just the other day," continues Dunmall on a crime theme. "Neil said, 'Did you know Terry Downes used to hang out with the Krays?' So I wonder – did I play for the Kray brothers?"

Still aged 15, Dunmall quit school. Encouraged by his father, a semi-pro drummer, he took a job at Bill Lewington's, a wind instrument shop in Shaftesbury Avenue that was a linchpin of London's 60s music scene. There he learned to repair saxophones. Not yet enamoured of jazz, the teenage Dunmall couldn't help being impressed by American players Ben Webster, Roland Kirk and Stan Getz, who all brought their instruments for repair and stood in front of him, ripping out choice phrases as they tested the horns. At this time he had a few lessons with Kathy Stobart, a top ranking tenor player who ran her own group as well as performing for many years with Humphrey Lyttelton's band. "I couldn't fathom Charlie Parker," recalls Dunmall, "but Kathy played a few jazz licks and I thought, oh, that's interesting. I slowly, slowly started to find out about it, actually through the free players first. Albert Ayler – I thought, that's more like it. I connected with the energy of it. Then hearing [John] Coltrane, it was hard for me at first, but then I got it."

By 18, Dunmall had left home, become a proper hippy and joined a meditation movement called The Divine Light Mission. They all lived in an ashram in Wandsworth, South London: "It was a house full of musicians, so you can imagine, they bent the rules a bit. But every night we were listening to talks or meditating." After a trip to a festival in India, Divine Light Mission decided to start a big band, and Dunmall got his sax back out of the cupboard: "I never touched my horn for three months, but then I was the first one to join the band, and gradually other musicians came from all over the world. They played complex music and they were very good at it. This was where I first heard a Coltrane record."

The group were named after a French cartoon character, Marsupilami. Being a thoroughly international organisation, Divine Light set off for the US in the early 70s. First they organised a large scale showcase event in an astrodome in Texas; sadly this was only half full, so ambitions were scaled back, and the focus moved to meditation and music, by now in Los Angeles. This was where Dunmall met Alice Coltrane, and unlike many of his colleagues, he knew exactly who she was.

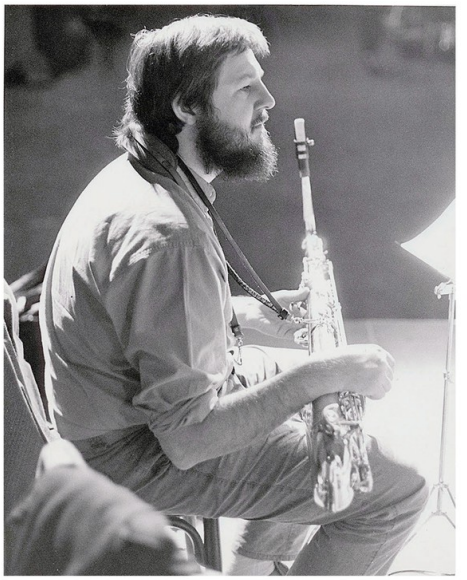
This was a time before John Coltrane's widow established her own ashram, and she was intrigued enough by Marsupilami to organise some rehearsals so they could play her music.

"We were living on Hollywood Boulevard, in a hotel next to the Chinese Theatre," Dunmall recounts. "We could walk down to the rehearsal place. Alice had a real frown on; she didn't play

Paul Dunmall in Leigh, Worcestershire, March 2023

Dunmall (second left) with Spirit Level, 1980

Poster for Young Socialists event featuring The Element Of Truth, 1970



London Jazz Composers Orchestra performance, 1987

Courtesy Paul Dunmall

anything, she listened. She came out regularly for maybe three months. We played all her music, and there was a solo for me. So I stand up and I do my scream-up bit – Pharoah Sanders, Albert Ayler, Coltrane. The difference being, as she then said – and it was wonderful – when John and Pharoah played in that way they were calm inside. It absolutely rings true, and I say the same thing to younger players now: be centred in your music. It's not just 'go mad', which is what I did. I just wanted to go berserk and tear the walls down. But in fact it's much stronger if you do it from a centred position. It actually becomes bigger. You're not just blowing nonsense, it comes from somewhere, and I've learned that in my life. But she was the first one to tell me that."

I ask if this spiritual, meditational approach to music has carried on consistently through his career. "Definitely," he replies. "It's a deep part of what I do. I don't sit and formally meditate, it's like with improvised music, it comes upon me. And it can come at the weirdest times. I can't explain it really, but when I'm playing that, I connect with this thing, that's the energy you want. It's what Coltrane did to me — I said, what's that? That's what I want. And it's been a huge part of my life."

I persist with the theme. Over such a long, varied career, have things changed? Have you really felt the same way right through, until now? "It's different," he eventually offers. "I've got rid of the superfluous stuff. It's the same thing but it's much bigger and better. It doesn't mean I know anything more, it's just that I understand it much better than I did when I was 19. And whatever band I was playing with, even with Danny Thompson [in the progressive folk group Dando Shaft], my history's there and the audience can hear a bit of it. I'm not being righteous about it, it's not a case of 'I am playing the truth for you', none of that. In fact it makes you even more humble, more respectful. Jung said you study all this stuff but the knowledge you have you could put on the tip of my little finger. I think the more you feel it and understand it, the less you know."

The Divine Light Mission finally disintegrated and our man found himself back in the real world with no work permit. He hooked up with a Mexican band called Hispanics – "A guy from El Salvador, a Mexican bass player, a Guatemalan" – playing every weekend. Not quite at the standard required to land the gigs playing for salsa dancers, Hispanics worked a whole street of clubs in Oxnard, north of Los Angeles. Everyone was dancing anyway, and they played "for bloody five hours a night. One Sunday we played for 13 hours: in the afternoon for all the strawberry pickers, then back to the club and finished at two in the morning."

Suddenly Dunmall's flatmate, a trombone player, found them both a better paid job, joining Johnny 'Guitar' Watson's band. Watson had been playing electric blues since the mid-50s, but was busy reinventing himself as a funk showman, bedecked with huge sunglasses, drop-dead suits and wall to wall bling. Dunmall played on the 1976 album *Ain't That A Bitch*, including the single "Superman Lover". "He was the real deal," remembers Dunmall. "When I first met him, he had his cowboy hat, his gold tooth and his cigarette. He was playing this unbelievable blues guitar and he was looking straight at me. We made an album, rehearsed for six weeks and toured for a year – that was a great education! Though he did ask us to sing; I said no, I can't do that. We used to warm up the audience before he came onstage – we played "Hard Work" by John Handy, and I used to tear the arse out of it. I was doing Albert Ayler and Pharoah Sanders over that! Oh, I used to give it some stick. He'd say, 'Hey motherfucker, you trying to make it hard for me? Just cool it.'"

Having been told to calm down by both Alice Coltrane and Johnny 'Guitar' Watson, Dunmall returned to the UK and established himself as a mighty voice on tenor sax in British jazz. In the 80s he played with pianist Tim Richards's Spirit Level, alongside Paul Anstey on bass and Tony Orrell on drums. At this stage he was "one of Britain's best kept jazz secrets" (declared *The Wire* 64). Playing with trombonist Paul Rutherford, drummer Louis Moholo and pianist Keith Tippett, he helped establish a free improvisation scene in Oxford.

In the 90s, Dunmall celebrated bassist Paul Rogers's return to the UK from the US by fixing a few dates for himself and Rogers plus Tippett and drummer Tony Levin. At first they went out under the unwieldy name The Paul Dunmall/Keith Tippett Quartet, but eagerly swapped this for Mujician, Tippett's young daughter's description for what her dad did for a living. Mujician toured widely until Levin's death in 2011.

Mujician were always a free improvisation band, and more recently Dunmall has concentrated on free playing, which he has often stated is his first love. One fine example is his regular quartet with pianist Liam Noble, bassist John Edwards and drummer Mark Sanders. The excellent *One Moment* on the FMR label captures an intense evening at the Birmingham Conservatoire in November 2022, one 44 minute piece, plenty of drama.

What does he see as being the best ingredients for free improvisation? What makes it work? "Free music is not for everyone, and not everyone can do it," muses Dunmall. "I was naturally attracted to it, but the big thing of course is being able to listen. That is numero uno. Listen to what's going on around you. What I've learned over the years is, before, I played like *badagrrr*!" He impersonates a spluttering raspberry sound. "But now I leave much more gaps. It's taken a lifetime of learning to leave the space. And when I play it's got to uplift or add to the music.

"A lot of players maybe think free playing is easy, you can do what you like, and it's like bursting a balloon, you've built an energy up and the whole thing deflates. But with great players – like Paul Rogers, like when I used to play with Keith Tippett and Tony Levin in Mujician, and my new quartet with Liam Noble and Mark Sanders and John Edwards – it just builds and builds and builds. Because they're so fantastic at what they do. It doesn't matter whether I play or not! If it wobbles a bit, someone sorts it out within a split second. And that is why playing with great free players is so much easier."

"Johnny 'Guitar' Watson was the real deal. We played John Handy's "Hard Work" and I used to tear the arse of it. Oh, I used to give it some stick. He'd say, 'Hey motherfucker, you trying to make it hard for me?'"

What's struck me while listening to Dunmall recently is that he has developed the rare ability of knowing when to stop. The quartet he's talking about with Noble, Sanders and Edwards are remarkable, functioning like a giant quadruple-brained being, a doubling up of Steve Martin's *The Man With Two Brains*. If you simply stop playing during an intense quartet passage, the whole air in the room changes. Dunmall concurs: "I want it to be like Swiss cheese, full of holes. Let the air pass through, rather than that full-on thing that I did for years and years. I was talking to John Marshall, the drummer, about this. He said, 'Yeah, you're the old school: give it one! Like me!' And I remember all that, we used to give it one, flat out. And if you weren't playing flat out, it wasn't happening. Those days have gone, thank god. It was very macho, in your face, tough tenors, now it's more musical. You can still have that 'Wham!' when it's ready, but it's not for half an hour. It's maybe for a minute or two, and then it breathes, let it breathe... [sighs] I love that."

And yet in spite of his commitment to free music, this spring Dunmall has just released the ebullient *It's A Matter Of Fact* on Martin Archer's Discus label, a record bursting with hooky themes, exciting chord shifts and a gritty horn section that loves to riff. It also boasts vocalist Julie Tippetts leading the line, an exhilarating sound we haven't heard for some time. If the quartet *One Moment* is intense communion or ceremony, then *It's A Matter Of Fact* is the afterparty, an eight-piece ensemble swinging out and patently having fun. All those tunes, the heads beloved by jazz musicians, are written by Dunmall.

In a 2000 interview with Philip Gibbs, Dunmall sounded pretty gloomy about his composing prospects. "Most improvisors, in my view, are not particularly good at composing, including me,"

he sighs. “I think, why bother having the bit of composition, you may as well steam straight into the improvisation.”

But now it turns out that all he needed was a spot of encouragement from a decent producer, in this case Archer. "With Keith Tippett and the others, we used to say that if we played heads we'd actually work more, it'd be more accessible to people. So we're not having that! We don't want to work more! Forget it – we wouldn't come down off our high horses, we improvise only. In this case I just thought, why not? Occasionally I'm going to see what happens if I write some stuff. Martin Archer suggested this: would you do a record with Julie, and Charlotte Keeffe [on trumpet and flugelhorn] who I'd never met. I said, I'll try it – I actually wrote a song, it was almost a throwaway, but I loved it.”

By now you've probably gathered that Dunmall suffers from an excess of English self-deprecation. The way he mocks himself for daring to write a song, apologetically offering it to his singer – “You needn't sing it, we'll dump it anyway if it doesn't work” – it's easy to forget I'm talking to someone regularly hailed as one of finest contemporary tenor players. It's all part of Dunmall's rumpled and undeniable charm. If he learned plenty from Johnny ‘Guitar’ Watson, he certainly didn't learn relentless self-promotion.

Likewise he has taken his time to feel comfortable as a bandleader. “The first time I can remember it being actually my group,” he reminisces, “was my octet around 1990. I didn't like being a bandleader, I found it very difficult. I'm more comfortable now. I'm a very good sideman in someone else's band, I'll give you everything.” A real bandleader, I suggest, is the guy who, when you make a suggestion about the music, seems somehow not to have heard what you said. “When I'm doing these things,” he chuckles, “people chip in and say, ‘Why don't we do that?’ I say, Yeah, brilliant, that's a good idea. I wrote heads for a band with Percy Pursglove on trumpet [Paul Dunmall Brass Project]. Percy was like, ‘Let's try this,’ and I loved it. It's much more democratic.”

In 2018 Dunmall played an unusual set at Birmingham's Supersonic Festival. Sat alone in a shed (that's the Ideas Of Noise shed) he presented five different bagpipes, none of them Scottish. For the first ten minutes, all viewable via YouTube, he improvised on an earthy yellow bagpipe from Iran with a double chanter. It's a bracing display of chordal dissonance. Far from attempting an authentic folk homage, Dunmall takes what he calls a Stockhausen approach, relishing the harsh squeals and chordal clashes of his two reeds.

“I heard the Iran pipes on a Nonesuch record, it sounded like Jimi Hendrix! They were on eBay and took six weeks to arrive, but when I cranked them up they sounded incredible. Then I played them in South London, just a few minutes, and a guy from Iran came out of the audience. I said, ‘look I'm really sorry’, but he loved hearing them. They're played at weddings, outdoors, with a drummer.” Realising the power of a double chanter, Dunmall wondered whether a triple might be even better – that's three reeds, and three pipes to be cross-fingered and manhandled into an aural miasma. He took the idea to the experienced pipe-builder Michael York, who wrestled with tunings for several months. So now Dunmall is the delighted owner of a custom built set of triple pipes, unique in the world. He went back to York with another idea, four chanters, but York pronounced it unbuildable. A reed too far.

Dunmall's attitude to his bagpipe playing is that he's never going to compete with the skills and refinements of top traditional players, but, as he puts it, “I've got something to say, I've got my own voice.” The same applies to his remarkable woodcuts, several of which adorn the sleeve of *It's A Matter Of Fact*. They are fiercely monochrome, tightly drawn images with some abstract areas, slightly reminiscent of Australian Aboriginal art. The parallel with improvised music is that, as Omar Little from the TV series *The Wire* might put it, when your chisel come for your woodblock, you best not miss. You get one chance, and mistaken marks cannot be taken back.

He has even got a woodblock duo going with another printmaker, Oxford based Peter Lawrence. For five years Lawrence was chairman of the Society of Wood Engravers. Together they have produced a book of pictures: *20 Duets: Collaboration & Improvisation*. Dunmall speaks of Lawrence with affection: “He's a huge jazz fan from the late 60s. He heard Derek Bailey and all of them, he loved it all. We talked about doing an improvised block: the first one, I started it off. It's like that old game [he draws a series of rapid squiggles on paper]; now make something out of that. I send it to him and he finishes it off. Then the second block, Pete does something and I finish it off.”

Naturally, Dunmall stresses his lowly status as an artist, barely qualified to clean up Lawrence's wood shavings. But he can't fool me. I've spotted that one of his woodcuts is on the 2023 calendar of the Society of Wood Engravers. That's an honour you don't get by messing about. We can no longer go out and see John Coltrane play, or Pharoah Sanders. But we can still listen live to Paul Dunmall, and we're luckier than we realise. ○

Paul Dunmall plays 70th birthday concerts at London's Vortex and Birmingham's Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space this month: see Out There. Paul Dunmall Ensemble's *It's A Matter Of Fact* is released by Discus

Paul Dunmall's custom triple chanter bagpipe

On the cusp of the 1990s, a hard-knock scene in southern California forged a new punk ethos through the work of Heroin, Pitchfork and Gravity Records

By Tony Rettman

Once Upon a Time in San Diego

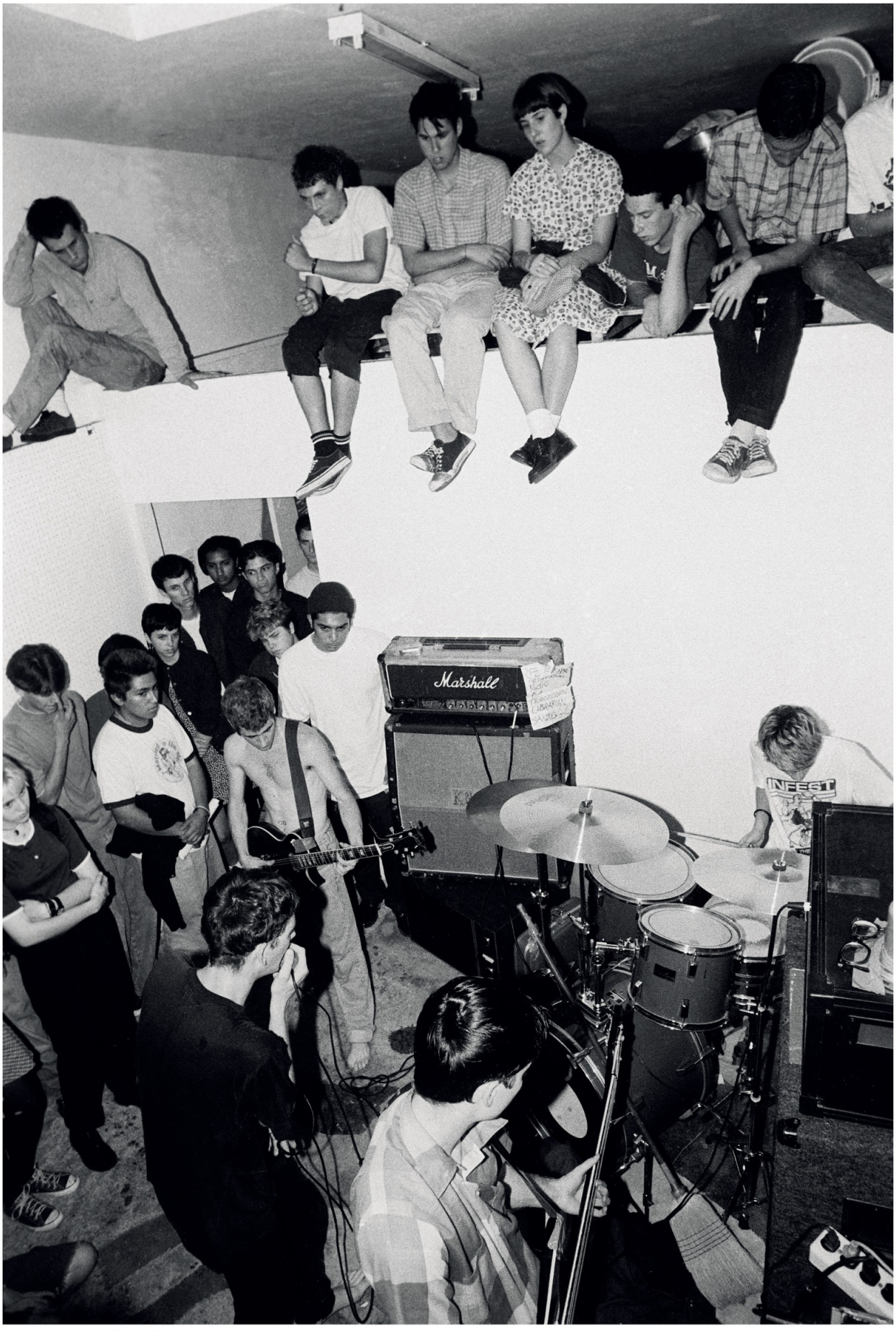
By the late 1980s, Scott Bartoloni had put on his fair share of hardcore punk shows in San Diego, despite the fact he was only 16 years old. Under the title of Tied Down Productions and with the aid of his mother, Bartoloni had rented out various trade union halls around town to host shows with southern California hardcore groups like Bad Religion, Final Conflict and RKL as well as Government Issue, Agnostic Front, Dag Nasty and other bands from the East Coast. "I would end up having to hire the local skinheads for security," he recalls 35 years later, sounding as if he still regrets the decision. "That wasn't good because they would just beat up anyone whether they were causing trouble or not."

His last show, a four band bill topped by Los Angeles's The Angry Samoans in 1988, he describes as a "total disaster". "It was a sold-out show and we kept the doors shut to keep people from sneaking in, so it got really hot and people got angry." Opening the show, vocalist Steve 'Stevo' Jensen of Orange County goof-punk troupe The Vandals introduced their song "Ladykiller" using a racial slur. Within seconds, the stage was bombarded and equipment was destroyed, while The Vandals made a hasty exit through an alleyway. "It was supposedly a black skinhead who led the charge," offers Bartoloni. Matt Anderson, a high school acquaintance, captured the entire grisly event on videotape: "The scene was already bad but that show was the cherry on top. That was the final big hardcore show in San Diego for a while."

The punks of San Diego literally fought to be noticed in the 1980s. Throughout the decade, the military town on the border with Tijuana, Mexico was overshadowed by hardcore's birthplace Los Angeles to the north, and became better known for menacing punk gangs than punk bands. An exception was Battalion Of Saints, who put San Diego hardcore on the map with their self-released *Fighting Boys* EP in 1982. But according to Jason Traeger, who co-edited the San Diego fanzine *Leading Edge*, even they had something of a nasty reputation around town. "Battalion Of Saints were a brawler band. The singer George [Anthony] would kick people in the head from the front of the stage. That band had an antisocial presence. This is back when San Diego was nicknamed Slow Death. That was the vibe."

The editors of *Leading Edge*, in the zine's short existence, tried to pivot their debaucherous scene closer to the positive grassroots ones they admired in Washington DC and Reno, Nevada. Betwixt interviews with bands were articles decrying punk violence and sexism as well as a regular feature called "More Than Music", which gave insight into how to improve your local scene by editing a fanzine or putting on a show, all with step by step instructions. "We were the younger breed who were straight edge and positive and we just wanted the shows to be fun," says Traeger. But by the midpoint of the 80s, attempts at such organisation seemed futile and the zine dissolved. "When

Jeff Winterberg



Clikatat Ikatowi at 915 E Street, San Diego, early 1990s, watched by Heroin's Matt Anderson (top left)

Pitchfork at the University of California San Diego, 1988

Heroin at Gravity's Third Street house, San Diego, early 1990s

Britton Neubacher (Heroin); Miki Vuckovich (Pitchfork)

there's a contingent of 20 or 30 people who go to punk shows specifically looking for a fight, that's not something you're going to change with a fanzine. That's something that needs to work its way out naturally."

The godfather of San Diego DIY punk, Bob Beyerle (aka Bob Barley) ran Vinyl Communications, one of the most significant San Diego punk labels in the 1990s. "I don't think these people who ruined the shows should be given that much attention," he argues. A lifelong construction worker and plumber, Beyerle calls in from a job applying adhesive to a water pipe at a hotel. "I'm literally sitting here waiting for glue to dry. It usually takes about two hours, so I'd say this is the perfect time to do an interview!"

He returns to the theme of the violent days of hardcore in the city. "I don't think what happened at Scott's show was a catalyst for change," he continues. "There were a lot of young people coming into the scene by the late 80s and they were smart enough to know they didn't want to be involved in that kind of shit."

After winning a PA system in a raffle at a local music store in 1985, Beyerle and his friends decided to form the band Neighborhood Watch. "It was just me and my buddies fucking around," he says sheepishly. But with a can-do attitude and the skills to match, he built a small studio in the backyard of his home for the band to rehearse and record. By the next year, the fruits of his labour appeared into the world as Neighborhood Watch's debut EP, also the premier Vinyl Communications release. "We wanted to put on a show in the studio after the 7" came out," recalls Beyerle. "So we put up some flyers locally and a bunch of kids I'd never seen before showed up. After we were done playing, I said, hey, we've got this 7" for sale, and a line of about 15 or 20 people formed. The kids from Amenity ended up being in it and I met them and put out their first 7" and something new snowballed from there."

By casting a wide net, Vinyl Communications showcased the diverse array of bands arising from the city during the end of the decade, including the moody Night Soil Man and the sample-laden Beyerle noise project Tit Wrench, not to mention out of towners Skullflower, Kid606, Merzbow and the collected works of infamous prank phone call artist Longmont Potion Castle.

Amenity vocalist Mike Denny was enamoured by Bob Beyerle's self-sufficient set-up, and asked advice on starting his own record label. I finally get hold of Denny while he's healing from a broken rib acquired from a cycling accident. "I had no idea how to press records, and Bob had just got a distribution deal with Mordam Records, which was great for the time," he reveals. "So we worked something out between us where I could make records through him and have them distributed by Mordam."

Denny's shortlived label Down Side, grafted onto Vinyl Communications as a subsidiary, showcased Amenity as well as a band he played guitar for, Forced Down, who exhibited Soundgarden-like heaviness crossed with a deep reverence for Ian MacKaye of Minor Threat/Fugazi's shortlived band Embrace.

Avoiding the cliches found on most hardcore record jackets of mushroom clouds and mosh pit scrums, Denny took a personalised approach, using thick, non-glossy textured cardstock paper imprinted with rubber stamps, giving the releases an artistic flare absent from hardcore records. "There were bands from the UK like Discharge where they had these stark, black and white covers and I wanted something that was more colourful, looked bigger and stood out. The rubber stamping was basically out of necessity because I couldn't afford colour printing. When I found out I could have a rubber stamp made of any image for ten or 15 bucks, that was it."

"There was a lot of rubber stamping going on back then!" jokes Greg Anderson, the future founder of Sunn 0))) and the Southern Lord label (now putting together a collection of Heroin's work) who played second guitar in Amenity during a brief move to San Diego in the summer of 1989. "We all sat around Mike's living room putting those early Down Side records together. My previous limited experience with releasing the 7" EP by my band Brotherhood was that the process took six to eight months minimum after you handed everything into the manufacturer. There was a sense of urgency to what he was doing where he couldn't wait, so he figured out a way we could do it ourselves. Mike was getting stuff out quicker with this method and documenting the scene as it was happening. It gave motivation to the San Diego scene."

Along with Down Side, Amenity and Forced Down, Denny roadied for a band who were also offering something unique to San Diego's desolate underground, Pacific Beach's Pitchfork. "We thought our town was a backwater with nothing interesting going on," declares Pitchfork's guitarist and vocalist Rick Froberg. "So we were going to do it ourselves." Pitchfork began what would become a familiar theme in San Diego of concocting something new and specific to the city from out of town influences, in this case the bands on Washington DC's Dischord label and David Grubbs's Louisville punk band Squirrel Bait.

Froberg's nasal, incredulous drawl and the staccato guitar work of John Reis were the things you'd clock upon first hearing Pitchfork, but the unconventional recording methods displayed on their 7" EP *Saturn Outhouse* (1989) and LP *Eucalyptus* (1990)

"Setting up alternative venues like Che Cafe was to call out the violence and make it a safer place for women and kids of colour to come to the shows" Britton Neubacher

added another layer of intrigue. By including fertile moments from the studio such as an extended moment of feedback, the interference from a faulty amp wire, or the workout of a song on acoustic guitar, a fly on the wall approach to recording gave their sparse discography a peculiarly intimate feel. Froberg and Reis went on to continue this trademark in their subsequent band, the highly successful Drive Like Jehu. When I ask Froberg if these were conscious attempts at studio experimentation, he guffaws. "We didn't know what we were doing! It was all an experiment!"

Froberg and Pitchfork were survivors of San Diego punk violence, and made an effort to play unconventional all-ages spaces where they could mix the bills to include anyone from local bands like Night Soil Man and Fishwife to Orange County straight edge hardcore acts Hard Stance and Carry Nation. "Rick was really pivotal at spearheading efforts to play venues where the skinheads wouldn't go," reveals Britton Neubacher, then a teenager who had moved to high school in the area from Hawaii. A few years later, she went on to edit the fanzines *Skew* and *Wives Tales*. "Setting up shows at these alternative venues like The Che Cafe was a concerted effort to call out the violence and make it safer for women and kids of colour to come out to the shows," she explains. "What happened was a diverse group of fans came out of the woodwork to hear this eclectic mix of bands, and that's when a lot of musical diversity began to happen in San Diego under the umbrella of punk."

The Che Cafe was nestled in a remote area on the campus of the University of California San Diego. Named The Coffee Shack when it opened in the late 60s, it was rebranded in 1980 as Cheap Healthy Eats, the name later shortened to the abbreviation of The Che Cafe while using an image of Che Guevera as a mascot for a space which hosted radical political thinkers, poetry and punk rock. "At the time, it was an L-shaped building with a kitchen and one small room with no stage," recalls Denny, who booked a number of shows there. "There was an outside patio area and a full glass window where you could watch the band from outside, but sometimes the windows would get steamed up from all the people we'd cram in there."

"I think I was 13 when I first went to The Che," remembers Justin Pearson, a San Diego native whose long history in the city includes political hardcore band Struggle, Swing Kids and The Locust. "My show attendance was very limited at this point. I didn't really know what a proper punk venue was supposed to look like, and The Che Cafe was this crazy hippy commune-type place that served vegan food before people were even aware what it was. The vibe and the people were different than what I

was expecting, as it was very upfront in being all-inclusive with no tolerance for fascist, sexist, or homophobic stuff, which was pretty unique for the time. I felt comfortable there and felt that was the path I'd like to take rather than shows filled with racist skinheads stabbing people."

Conservative powers that be in both the city and the university kept an eye on events at The Che Cafe, and when Denny began booking punk shows there, the scrutiny intensified. At a show headlined by Orange County's Inside Out, fronted by future Rage Against The Machine vocalist Zack de la Rocha, police arrived in droves due to a fire code violation and forcibly tried to shut the show down. After negotiations with the police, the show was allowed to go on if everyone stayed seated. "500 kids sat down criss-cross and watched Inside Out," remembers a still-amazed Denny. "It's crazy to think of 16 year old kids going up against this shit and not getting arrested." Although there have since been numerous other disputes with both the university administration and the San Diego police, The Che Cafe still operates as a venue and restaurant to this day.

At the tail end of 1989, Bartoloni was in the the embryonic stages of forming a band alongside high school students Matt Anderson and Ron Johnson. "We started out with Matt playing drums, Scott on guitar and another friend Chad Jackson singing," recalls Johnson. "It eventually morphed into Matt singing when we got another person from our high school to play drums who was a few years behind us, Aaron Montaigne." After briefly experimenting with a two-guitar line-up, the band transformed into a quartet with Anderson as vocalist. Their band name Heroin was an odd choice, especially as its members were straight edge. "We were always on the fence about the name and I don't know if I was ever totally comfortable with it," confesses Anderson. "It was based on this ambiguous idea of monetary possessions, greed and desire. You try to work your way up in society and end up being addicted to these material things you think will bring you happiness. Plus, it's just a gnarly word. It was truly punk. You couldn't tell your mom you liked a band called Heroin!"

"The name Heroin was based on this ambiguous idea of monetary possessions, greed and desire. Plus, it's just a gnarly, truly punk word. You couldn't tell your mom you liked a band called Heroin!" Matt Anderson

Like their mentors Pitchfork, Heroin hit upon something idiosyncratic from a hodgepodge of influences that included the crazed style of Italy's Raw Power, The Misfits' horror punk, and local ragers Battalion Of Saints. "But Scott was older, had been into hardcore longer, and was more mature than us," explains Anderson. "So he was into all the Washington DC stuff. He introduced us to Faith, Embrace and Rites Of Spring. I guess that's why we were labelled as emo later, but I'd say it was only partially emo in the heartfelt way it was delivered."

There was no denying that Heroin's music was from the heart, and it was certainly authentic hardcore punk. But through the grainy yowl of Anderson and Bartoloni's murky interpretation of DC punk guitar, they created something unique. "We were all definitely fucking weirdos," states drummer Aaron Montaigne, "That's where we connected as a band." Anderson's existential lyrics added another cryptic element, like the zen one-liners repeated throughout "We Can Never Know": *"We can never know and it won't matter"*.

After releasing a debut 7" *All About Heroin* in 1991, Anderson and Johnson decided to release their second EP via their own newly founded imprint Gravity. Using the lessons laid out to them by Bob Beyerle and Mike Denny, they aimed to keep costs down while creating something that stood out. "Ron was into silk screening," recollects Anderson. "I think he took a class in high school. He had silkscreened a flier for a show onto a paper bag and we thought it looked cool, so we decided to do the record cover like that."

Referred to by many as simply *The Paper Bag* 7", the second Heroin EP was an anomaly on the American underground when it was released. Housed in a roughly textured paper bag caked thick with silkscreen ink, the look of the record challenged the homogenous look many hardcore punk releases presented at the time of early computer graphics and photos of anguished young men flying through the air with a guitar strapped on their back. Here, the artwork comprised a dense image of a woman playing a casino slot machine, lyrics sprawled across the back, some rambling explanations of their origins, and a small insert with sparse credits. It gave Heroin something of an anti-image to folks admiring them from afar, in my case from the bedroom of my family home in New Jersey. "There was a formula to putting out a hardcore 7" back then that seemed cheesy to us," says Anderson. "It would have so much information on it. We felt you could either make a big deal out of what you did or keep it down to earth. We wanted to strip it all down artistically to its bare essence. It just seemed lame to make such a big deal out of recording four songs."

Johnson and Anderson rapidly blew through the first pressing of 1000 EPs. "I can't remember how many times I had to go to the grocery store to get paper bags for screen printing," laughs Ron Johnson. "I would have to cut and turn them inside out for printing and we only had one screen, so the labour between that first pressing of 1000 records was split up between Matt and me."

After Heroin's first US tour – where they played alongside Lava, a shortlived unit containing Tonie Joy, formerly the guitarist in Maryland's Moss Icon – the idea came to expand their label activities to release other groups. Gravity ended up documenting one of the most experimental times in hardcore punk, releasing records by bands from their home state like John Henry West and Man Is The Bastard, as well as New York's Born Against and the UK's Huggy Bear.

Gravity releases found their way over to the East Coast via New Jersey based independent distributors Gern Blandsten and Old Glory, and immediately grabbed the attention with their combination of hand-tailored looks and gnarled, confounding sounds. Listening was like trying decipher a communication from an alien lifeform. East Coast bands returned from tour giving high praise to San Diego, The Che Cafe and various local groups who were yet to record their music, such as powerviolence pioneers Crossed Out or the shortlived and ferocious End Of The Line. Evidently Heroin and other Gravity bands had figured out a way to experiment within hardcore's steadfast ethos of keeping it loud, fast and uncompromising.

One of Gravity's first San Diego releases was 1993's *The Lady Is A Cat*, a 12" EP by Antioch Arrow, featuring Heroin drummer Aaron Montaigne as their vocalist. "We were inspired by The Birthday Party at a very young age, so we wanted to sprinkle a little bit of that in there for sure," says Montaigne. "Our bass player Mac Mann was the main songwriter and his style was frenetic. There were so many bands around at the time and our main goal was to be unique, more than anything. It was different from what I consider the more conventional song structures of Heroin."

Even compared to Heroin, *The Lady Is A Cat* is a loud, blinding barrage that sounds like it's forever on the brink of combustion. Opening with a militaristic snare roll and a shrill shriek, the 90 second closer "Teenage Debutante And The Debutante Ball" best encapsulates Antioch Arrow's maniacal style, concluding with a righteous soundbite from the 1982 American hardcore documentary *Another State Of Mind*, where a bearded punk condemns The Cramps for playing bars and extols the virtues of all-age venues.

Both Antioch Arrow releases for Gravity were recorded by Anderson, a trait he taught himself starting in 1991 after moving into Beyerle's backyard eight-track facility, now appropriately titled Neighborhood Studios. Learning this skill helped the label cut costs, but it also gave room for Anderson to craft his unique, warts and all recording style that became a signature for the label. Taking his cue from Pitchfork, Anderson would keep the

Drive Like Jehu, early 1990s

Amenity performance at Unbroken's farewell show, The Che Cafe, San Diego, 1995

Dave Mandel

Melanie Whitman photographing Heroin's Ron Johnson (left), Aaron Montaigne and Scott Bartoloni on tour, early 1990s

Antioch Arrow, mid-1990s

Jeff Winterberg (Antioch Arrow); Matt Anderson (Heroin)

tape running during recordings to create the source material for primitive sound collages comprising feedback, ear-piercing electronics, chewed-up recording tape, false starts and flubbed takes that were often placed between the songs on Gravity releases. "I liked leaving feedback or talking in there and letting the room sound play out and putting all these sounds together. On any other record, that would be considered unwanted noise. Letting those things exist on there I think was one of the more original things we did on Gravity, allowing all that extraneous stuff to be in there without muting it out."

Another bonus for the label was Anderson scoring a job at Custom Printing, a local print shop run by zine editor Vaughn Avakian. "I would normally hang out while they were running my jobs, so one time, Vaughn had to step out and asked me to babysit the press," recalls Anderson. "He showed me how to feed paper through it and how to add ink and water. After a while, he started to give me a discount if I ran the covers myself, and that's how I ended up working there. I printed some of the later Heroin sleeves there. You have to manually crank a paper bag to go through a printing press, and you really have to finesse it."

At this newfound occupation Anderson had the freedom to create some of the most iconic packaging for the label. For Mohinder's 7" EP, he used random images from magazines on which to print the record's information, making every cover a one of a kind item. For the debut release by Colorado's Angel Hair, manila envelopes were cut down and run through a press multiple times to create a blurry collage of insects, mohawked punk rockers and religious imagery. "I know the silkscreen stuff we did gets more credit, but I think we did a few interesting things on the printing presses. It really worked out well for me considering you couldn't go into any print shop with a stack of paper bags and ask them to run them through their press."

Neubacher, who volunteered her services to the label, is only too happy to sing his praises: "Matt Anderson was a cyclone of inspiration and energy and always wanted a personal touch to every record. Whatever we could get our hands on cheaply and reuse is what interested us. It was a lot of work and it always felt like we couldn't put the records together fast enough, but it was never about efficiency, it was about putting something from love out into the world."

"When looking at San Diego from the outside during the 90s, it might have seemed like it was all one tribe or one scene, but if you wanted to get granular about it, there ended up being three different camps divided by age," explains Neubaucher. As paper bags were being silkscreened and cardboard spray painted over at Gravity's headquarters, Rick Froberg and John Reis's newest vehicle Drive Like Jehu was looking to graduate from the all-ages shows of The Che Cafe. They became regulars at The Casbah, an over-21 night club opened by another hardcore punk show promoter in town, Tim Mays.

"We were newly minted adults who could drink in bars and a lot of the Gravity people were at least two years younger than us, which at the time seemed like this massive gulf," recalls Froberg. With Drive Like Jehu eventually signing to Atlantic Records, some in the Gravity camp felt Froberg and co had forgotten the all-ages friendly roots they helped seed for San Diego. "We were underage straight edge kids who wanted to go see Jesus Lizard or Drive Like Jehu, but they would just go and play at a bar, so we were pissed off about that," states Aaron Montaigne. "There was a wedge there until they started to take our bands seriously. But San Diego is a small place and we were around each other all of the time, so it wasn't a big deal."

Heroin broke up after the release of a six-song 12" EP in 1993, and their members splintered off into new projects. Antioch Arrow continued until 1995, jumping ship from Gravity to the shortlived Amalgamated label for their unforeseen foray into goth rock. Ron Johnson played with the shortlived quartet Second Story Window while Scott Bartoloni formed the audacious combo Clikatat Ikatowi with Mario Rubalcaba, a drummer he knew from local improvisational group Fervor. Rubalcaba recalls how they came upon a manic style that could go from trance-inducing to psychically jarring in seconds. "It was always a very organic formation of riffs and jamming to get to the end result. No one ever told anyone what to play or what not to play. We would play things over and over again and improvise things into structures that would become the songs."

Running Gravity out of a collective house on Third Street, Matt Anderson longed for an all in one facility similar to that available to Beyerle, where he could both record bands and take care of label business. "There was this rundown old vacant building up the street. I got in touch with the property manager and found out the rent was really cheap." Naming the studio after the formerly aristocratic part of town it was located in, Bankers Hill, Anderson moved in immediately. "It was pretty gross in there," he admits. "There were lots of cockroaches and it was a pretty depressing place, but I ran the label out of there for years with Andy Ward after Ron moved to Oakland. I recorded so much of the later Gravity stuff there, like Angel Hair, Clikatat Ikatowi, Three Mile Pilot and Man Is The Bastard. I lived in the backroom and some people lived in the hallway. It was a crazy little place."

Justin Pearson found something exhilarating in the chaos kicked up by Gravity Records and Montaigne's Antioch Arrow in particular. "That band was a big shifting point for me," he declares. "There was something of a subconscious backlash to Antioch Arrow at the time from the people who wanted everyone to abide by a certain set of rules and thought all bands had to adhere to a certain political ideology. A lot of people like [zine publisher/label runner] Kent McClard were drawing a line in the sand between Antioch Arrow and the political bands and I knew what side to be on because I thought what Antioch Arrow was doing was righteous."

"We were underage straight edge kids who wanted to go see Jesus Lizard or Drive Like Jehu, but they would just go and play at a bar – so we were pissed off about that"

Aaron Montaigne

Pearson's next band Swing Kids brought the shambling fury of Antioch Arrow to its logical conclusion, while exhibiting a love for avant garde jazz. With an image of saxophonist Marion Brown on the front and a Cecil Taylor quote on the back, their self-titled 1994 EP begins with "Disease", a bubbly, piano-forward improvisation that quickly surges into cacophonous, herky-jerky overdrive. That pattern repeats throughout its five songs. "To us, there were so many similarities between avant garde jazz and punk. Its spirit resonated with us and made total sense." After Swing Kids, Pearson founded the quirky, synth-led powerviolence unit The Locust and since then has continued to make extreme and challenging music with his bands Retox, Dead Cross (featuring Slayer's Dave Lombardo) and his most recent project Deaf Club, not to mention his own Three One G label, which he has run for almost 30 years with his business partner Sal Gallegos.

I probe Pearson on the secret of what makes San Diego a place that produces such interesting music, and he lays it out as best as he can. "I remember going to The Che Cafe once for an all you can eat spaghetti dinner where Heroin and a three-piece jazz band played, and it all made sense to me. Jazz! Heroin! Spaghetti! Musically, San Diego can draw from various places and I guess The Locust was a good example. We loved brutal grindcore and Moog synthesizers, so we just combined them. I saw Aaron Montaigne's new band VR Sex play recently, and it doesn't sound like Antioch Arrow or Heroin, but it excited me just like those bands did as a kid. It was fresh and new and exciting on its own and that's something that's more important than whatever anyone would call a San Diego sound.

"It's like the all you can eat spaghetti show at The Che with Heroin and the jazz band. There's something in San Diego's musical DNA where you try to get away with whatever you can." ○

Heroin's *Discography* is released by Southern Lord

The Beat Conductor

Dave Lombardo

Slayer's groundbreaking thrash metal made their drummer a sought after man in avant garde circles. As he releases his debut solo album, he ponders a lifetime of playing against the grain

By Phil Freeman
Photography by Sam Hutchinson

In May 2015, Dave Lombardo played a duo with saxophonist John Zorn at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, positioned in front of Jackson Pollock's painting *Black & White (Number 20)*. Afterwards, a fan approached him and asked if the music had been performed from a score.

"I told him no, this was improvised, and he was blown away, because we connected onstage so well," Lombardo recalls. "And when I told Zorn that some guy asked me if this was all written, Zorn said, 'You should have told him that it was written! That would have really messed with him,' because it was so complex and bizarre. So I think next time I'm gonna do that, just to mess with the fans."

The relationship with Zorn goes back a quarter of a century. They were introduced by Mike Patton at the end of the 1990s, not long after the polymathic vocalist invited the drummer to be part of the group Fantômas. And those are far from Lombardo's only connections to avant garde and experimental music. In 1998, he made *Vivaldi: The Meeting*, a collection of pieces by the Italian composer recorded with critic and keyboardist Lorenzo Arruga and a small group of classical musicians and vocalists. The combination of harpsichord, celeste, oboe, flute, soprano and contralto vocals and Lombardo's thunderous backbeat creates a sound like the heaviest chamber prog imaginable. The following year, he appeared in Matthew Barney's film *Cremaster 2*, playing a drum solo to accompany Morbid Angel vocalist Steve Tucker and a swarm of bees (it's hard to explain without seeing it). In 2005, he released *Drums Of Death*, an album-length collaboration with DJ Spooky that also included guest appearances from Chuck D of Public Enemy, Dälek, guitarist Vernon Reid and Meat Beat Manifesto's Jack Dangers.

Yet whenever he participates in – or initiates – one of these projects, the response rarely extends beyond "Hey, the metal guy made some art!" Lombardo, it seems, is forever to be thought of as the drummer from Slayer first and foremost.

Fortunately, that doesn't seem to bother him. "I really don't care," he declares. "It feels good to me. It's what makes me happy." He recalls listening to a board tape while driving home from San Francisco to Los Angeles after performing in an improvising trio with Patton and Zorn, as well as a version of Zorn's game piece *Cobra*, and finding himself thrilled by the way he fitted into it all. "They're amazing musicians, and to be a part of that, the gratification in my own mind, in my own heart, felt so good – I didn't care who was on board or not. And I believe people should feel like that about their art. Don't care about what people say. You do you. I always want to be a part of something that's different and out of the ordinary, and against the grain. I want to challenge people."

Lombardo's latest album is one of his most adventurous and challenging projects yet. *Rites Of Percussion* is an entirely solo effort, recorded at home and featuring multiple layers of drums played on several different kits, as well as a vast array of instruments from shakers and maracas to djembe, cajón, timbales, congas, a concert bass drum, timpani, gongs, and piano (recall Val Wilmer's description of Cecil Taylor's piano as 88 tuned drums). All of this percussion is layered and augmented by subtle production effects, though the playing is entirely real and nothing is programmed or snapped to a Pro Tools grid. The result is a 13 track, 35 minute suite that flows from "Initiatory Madness" to "Separation From The Sacred" to "Despojo" (translation: "Dispossession") to "Omiero" (a liquid used for purification in the Cuban religion of santería), ending with "Animismo". There's plenty of slamming funk metal rhythm, courtesy of a full rock kit – sometimes with a single bass drum, sometimes a double – but there are also ominous hand percussion interludes that hint at sacred ceremonies. In the album's second half, the three

Dave Lombardo in Todmorden, West Yorkshire, March 2023

“I was driving the Slayer train, and when I would go through these crazy drum rolls they trusted me to always land on the one. It may sound like I’m fucking shit up, going crazy, but no, I’m just being a little more entertaining and exciting than the original recording”

track sequence of "Blood Let", "Warpath" and "Guerrero" sounds like something from JG Thirlwell's retro-exotica project Steroid Maximus, or his score for the *Venture Bros* TV show.

Rites Of Percussion could be compared to other drum albums like Milford Graves's 1965 *Percussion Ensemble* or Andrew Cyrille's *What About?* from 1969. There are even some echoes of Art Blakey's two volume *Holiday For Skins*, from 1959. But the inspirations Lombardo himself cites are drum solos from classic rock bands of the 1970s – Led Zeppelin's "Moby Dick" and "Bonzo's Montreux", Deep Purple's "The Mule", Black Sabbath's "Rat Salad" – and one album in particular from Latin percussion legend Tito Puente.

"I was very familiar with him at a young age, and I was aware of his ability to create these songs where you could tell in the recordings that he started a beat, a rhythm pattern, and then he would take another track and layer another pattern over that and then he'd do it again and lay another pattern over that," he says. "I was like, wow, this is so inspiring. I would love to create something like that... and then what really solidified the thought of creating an album like this was when I first met Patton and I stayed at his house and we were just starting Fantômas. I told him about the idea, and he said, 'You should totally do it! Have you heard Tito Puente's *Top Percussion*?'"

Top Percussion is a fascinating 1958 album on which Puente leads an ensemble of percussionists that includes Mongo Santamaria, Willie Bobo, Enrique Marti, Francisco Aguabella and Julio Collazo through 11 tracks which showcase complex but pounding polyrhythms and call and response vocal chants. Many of the pieces on the album's first side are explicitly derived from the Afro-Cuban religion of santería, in which specific drum patterns are aligned with particular orishas (Yoruba deities which were equated with Christian saints as a way of disguising the participants' true religion during slavery). The album's second half is based around more popular Latin dance rhythms, and showcases Puente's timbales.

This cultural context was seemingly of little interest to Puente's label RCA, which never emphasised any of it in their promotional copy. Releasing it as part of their Living Stereo series, they likely pitched it to fans of Martin Denny and exotica in general.

Because *Rites Of Percussion* was recorded during pandemic isolation, Lombardo didn't have an ensemble to work with. But that also allowed him the freedom to work as inspiration struck and to create the tracks layer by layer. "Playing, layering, editing, removing, creating – I basically wrote in the computer," he explains. "So it wasn't like I sat down with paper, with sheet music, and sat there and wrote the notes. I'm not that savvy with music. I went ahead and took the route of going on tour with Slayer rather than going to college and learning music. So it was like, I would start, let's say, with a rhythm, something inspired me and I just went ahead, went into the studio, laid it down and if I felt, hey, I think something else needs to go here, I would punch myself in and/or create it in another session and then bring it over and piece it together.

"So I don't know what you would call that – to me, it's writing music, but in a different way. Like I said, it wasn't your typical scoring – I based it all on instinct, on what I felt and feeling and emotion and that's what I really wanted to do.

"I was able to focus and harness and expand my education on different software and recording techniques, and build up my studio arsenal to create this body of work," he continues. "And I think with all that time that I had, I was able to not only capture all these little moments, but I was able to really create a body of work that I was happy with, and I was able to present it to Patton, and he said, 'Dude, this is great – let's put it out.' I said, Are you sure? He said, 'Yeah, it sounds phenomenal.'"

He was born in Cuba in 1965, the youngest of four children. Before he was born, his two older brothers came to the US as part of Operación Pedro Pan, a programme supported by the Catholic Church through which Cuban children were housed with Catholic families in the US. The older Lombardo boys were ten and 13 at the time, and they had expected to reunite with their parents after five or six months, once they got their own visas.

But the confrontation between the US and USSR around the Cuban Missile Crisis shut down all diplomatic relations between Cuba and the US. It took Lombardo's parents over four years to get permission to leave the country, bringing him and his older sister along. When they arrived in South Gate, California, he was just over a year old.

"The only thing I remember is growing up in Los Angeles and living in a Cuban household," he said back in 2018. "Once I stepped foot out that front door, it was America. But everything inside my home was Cuban – the food, the music." That year saw him visit Cuba for the first time, taking his mother back to see their old house, and a few months later, he played shows in Havana and Holguín with Suicidal Tendencies.

Lombardo formed Slayer with guitarist Kerry King. After jamming together in the drummer's garage, they recruited second guitarist Jeff Hanneman and bassist/vocalist Tom Araya. In November 1983, they pooled their money and recorded their debut album, *Show No Mercy*, which was released on Metal Blade Records a month later. Their third album, 1986's *Reign In Blood*, was produced by Rick Rubin and released on the hiphop label Def Jam. Just 29 minutes long, it was a blistering landmark in thrash metal, and Lombardo's double bass drum solo on the opening track "Angel Of Death" was instantly legendary. But before the band could even commence touring behind the record, he quit, a newlywed in search of financial security. The following year, Rubin convinced him to rejoin the group, and he remained with them until early 1992, playing on the albums *South Of Heaven* and *Seasons In The Abyss* and the live *Decade Of Aggression*. The band made several albums without him in the 1990s and early 2000s, but he returned to performing with Slayer in 2002 and appeared on 2005's *Christ Illusion* and 2009's *World Painted Blood* (the last album before Hanneman's 2013 death).

In the studio, Lombardo insisted on keeping the rhythms human, speeding up or slowing down slightly in order to channel the energy like a conductor. "I remember Andy Wallace and Rick Rubin discussing it with the guys in the band [during the *Reign In Blood* sessions], because they were like, 'He speeds up here', and they said, 'It feels good. If it feels good, don't mess with it'."

The sessions for *Christ Illusion* marked Lombardo's first time working with a click track, and even then it was used sparingly. "So let's just say for example, let's keep it at 180 bpm. 'But after you start the song, Dave, we're gonna shut off the click at the beginning of the guitar [solo], and then from that point forward, do your thing.' And then I would almost conduct the band, and I would give the lead crescendos, and then I'd bring it down to as close to the tempo at the beginning of the song as possible."

Onstage, Lombardo was the loudest element in his bandmates' onstage monitors, and counter to the usual metal band practice of keeping things exactly as they are on the studio albums, he often changed things up in order to ramp up the intensity even higher. "I was driving the train. That's the way Jeff put it," he recalls. "And when I would go through these crazy drum rolls, they would always know – they trusted me to know that I would always land on the one. I could start a drum roll a bar earlier and they'd know I'll be there. It may sound like I'm fucking shit up, going crazy, but no, I'm just making it a little more entertaining and a little more exciting than the original recording.

"Yeah, there were key moments where you do have to pay respect to the recording, because those are iconic moments in the song where you have to keep it the same, but there were moments where I would go into these crazy rolls, and they would turn around like, 'Oh shit'."

Lombardo began his journey into the avant garde after being recruited to Fantômas, and joining Mike Patton in San Francisco. "I met John Zorn and he and I and Patton performed for the first time, we did this improvisation trio, and it was just vocals, saxophone and myself on double bass drums. And it was at times noise, and at times it was like controlled rhythm, but then we'd venture off into noise and then back again, and then we'd find a nice beautiful ending and tie a bow on it and that was one song. And then we'd do it again."

In spring 1999, Lombardo entered the studio with Zorn, guitarists Fred Frith and Marc Ribot, and Bill Laswell – whom he knew not as a dub wizard or a producer, but through his work with Sonny Sharrock, Peter Brötzmann and Ronald Shannon Jackson in Last Exit. They recorded three tracks for Zorn's album *Music Romance Volume Two: Taboo & Exile*, released in October of that year. "Sacrifist" was a thundering, post-punk/noise rock piece featuring both guitarists scraping away over Laswell's throbbing, envelope-filtered bass and Lombardo's jackhammer drumming, while "Thaalapalassi" was a longer, more atmospheric work that made room for some double bass thunder. A third piece, "The Possessed", featured Zorn on saxophone and Frith as the sole guitarist, and sounded like a cross between Ornette Coleman's Prime Time circa *Of Human Feelings* and Painkiller – Zorn's trio with Laswell and drummer Mick Harris – at their most explosive.

In May 2000, Lombardo recorded Zorn's *Xu Feng*, a collection of improvisations using the composer's game strategies, with a sort of double trio featuring Fred Frith and John Schott on guitars, Chris Brown and David Slusser on electronics, and himself and William Winant on drums and percussion. "Zorn was in the middle of the room, and he had a table laid out and on that table he had these cards... one card said 'Slow', another card said 'Fast', another card said 'Soft', another card said 'Hard', 'Arrhythmic', 'Rhythmic', and various other descriptions of music forms. He would point to two musicians and... sometimes it would be two cards at the same time. So it'd be rhythmic, fast, we'll start something, and then he'd turn over to two other musicians... and tell them, with these cards, with the descriptions, play the same thing but play it soft."

The music on *Xu Feng* doesn't jump between genres like Naked City's tightly structured pieces or famous Zorn compositions like *Spillane*. Instead, it consists of zaps and hums and wasp-like buzzes from the electronics, with occasional samples mimicking other instruments, and noise rock riffs from the two guitarists, with the drums mostly delivering jazz or rock beats, including some surprisingly heavy funk grooves. Some pieces, like "Dragon Gate Inn", are shred-fests, while others are more atmospheric. What's fascinating is that no matter how much the music speeds up or slows down, or whether it shifts into blasting hardcore or near-ambient quietude, Lombardo's loose, thrashy drumming remains recognisable throughout.

"It was the most amazing experience of my life to be a part of this education in drumming, in music, and it taught me so much that I didn't have to be that drummer that sticks to one genre," he recalls. "It taught me that I could be different. It taught me I could be weird, I could be mainstream, I could be whatever I want. You don't need to just be what you're known for."

Later that summer, Lombardo, Zorn, Frith and Laswell reunited for a short run of shows. The group, dubbed Bladerunner, performed only four times: at London's Barbican, the Olympia in Paris, the Bell Atlantic Jazz Festival in New York, and the Festival de Musique Actuelle in Victoriaville, Canada. The gigs were fully improvised, with Frith alternating between spiky riffs and bursts of pure noise (including whipping his guitar's strings with small chains); Laswell playing some of his impossibly deep, dubby basslines while also erupting into Last Exit-esque explosions; Zorn conducting in between shrieking saxophone solos; and Lombardo delivering driving beats and explosions of double bass thunder, eliciting possibly the first 'devil horns' ever seen at a jazz festival. At the New York performance, Boredoms vocalist Yamantaka Eye joined the four onstage, raising the intensity even higher with unearthly shrieks and gabbling.

Bill Laswell looked back fondly on the group in a 2011 interview. "I liked one of the reviews in London that said it was the first time the writer had ever heard these elaborate drum fills used to introduce a section in the middle of improvisation. It was funny; a lot of it was really funny."

"That quartet was great," remembers Lombardo. "But it's been many years that Frith hasn't joined us, so now we're going on – we went on before as Bladerunner, but now, today, it's Painkiller. We're bringing back that name, which is Zorn and Laswell and [originally] Mick Harris from Napalm Death, so now it's going to be myself."

Fantômas, Mike Patton's project with Lombardo, Melvins guitarist Buzz Osborne and bassist Trevor Dunn, was the opposite of improv – the group's songs, whether just a few seconds long or the 75 minute suite *Delìrivm Còrdia*, were rigorously scored. "I write down everything, put it on a tape, and say, 'That's it. Play it'," Patton explained in *The Wire* 254. "And you know, a lot of it's hard to decipher, so I'll have to sit down with Buzz or Dave and show them exactly what I want... that music is, more so than any of my other groups, about precision and execution. There is a right and a wrong way of playing it. And I really feel like my role is to illustrate very clearly what to do and what not to do."

Lombardo confirms Patton's role overseeing the music, recalling that when he first heard the demos for the band's debut album, he wasn't sure what his role would be. "I said to him, 'why do you need me? This demo sounds amazing.' He goes, 'Because I want to perform it live.'"

In performance, Fantômas were a thrilling sight. Lombardo and Patton faced each other from stage left and stage right, with Osborne and Dunn standing in the middle, backed up against the amps. The vocalist conducted the drummer through the intricate, jump-cut compositions, with the guitarist and bassist chopping out thrashy riffs that stopped as quickly as they started.

With *Rites Of Percussion* finally complete, nearly two decades after the idea first occurred to him, Lombardo is staying head-spinningly busy with a range of projects. He's currently drumming for reunited horror punk band The Misfits; for Patton and Dunn's other band Mr Bungle; his own arty hardcore act Dead Cross (with Patton, Retox guitarist Michael Crain, and bassist, one time Swing Kids and The Locust member, and San Diego scene mainstay Justin Pearson); for Bay Area thrash metal veterans Testament; and for Empire State Bastard, a shrieking, noisy grindcore project featuring Simon Neil and Mike Vennart of Scottish hard rock band Biffy Clyro, whom Lombardo is currently performing with across Europe.

On top of all that, he's made one of the biggest stylistic departures of his long career, forming Venamoris with his wife, singer-songwriter Paula Lombardo. A former back-up singer for Wayne Newton, Paula sings and plays piano on the project's debut album *Drown In Emotion*. Lombardo plays drums and handles production, with his son David A Lombardo mixing. The music is a collection of emotionally naked late night ballads with Lombardo ticking out minimal, quiet storm beats, occasionally playing with brushes.

Paula Lombardo had found her experience with Newton and the mainstream music business frustrating and walked away, but her husband brought her back in. "She got disillusioned with the music business... then she met me and I'm the guy who's like, you be you, put music out for you and nobody else, write how you want to write, don't write how anyone else tells you to, be your own genre, don't follow anything, just be original. One night I was adamant, I said, Paula, you need to write, you have a beautiful voice, a great ability, let's just do it."

They put the music together in their home studio, inviting guests from hard rock and metal bands to contribute here and there. It's unlike anything else in his catalogue, but that's precisely why he's so excited about it.

Lombardo recalls the epiphany he had when Patton released his first solo album, *Adult Themes For Voice*, a collection of a cappella eruptions recorded in hotel rooms while on tour with the group Faith No More. "He had a hit, then he created this avant garde body of work, and that left all the space in between for him to fill," he enthuses. "So anything he did in between [Faith No More's hit] "Epic" and *Adult Themes For Voice*, he could do no wrong, because he's done the whole spectrum of avant garde as well as mainstream and everything else in between.

"So in a way, with this drum record, I kind of wanted to do something like that. Something totally different, totally unexpected from me, percussive and cinematic in a way and so now, everything else in between is going to be, 'Oh, it doesn't surprise me – have you heard his drum record?'" ○

Dave Lombardo's *Rites Of Percussion* is released this month by Ipecac. Venamoris's *Drown In Emotion* is released by Three One G

The Wire / Dave Lombardo

Top 15 To Be Listened To On 3 May 2023

Venom
MMV (Castle)

Charles Mingus
The Clown (Atlantic)

Pearl Jam
Vs (Epic)

Pearl Jam
Vitalogy (Epic)

Wu-Tang Clan
Enter The Wu-Tang: 36 Chambers (Loud)

Blue Öyster Cult
Tyranny And Mutation (Columbia)

Azealia Banks
Broke With Expensive Taste (Azealia Banks/Prospect Park)

Sophie
Oil Of Every Pearl's Un-Insides Remix Album (Transgressive)

Prince
Sign "O" The Times (Paisley Park)

Rudimentary Peni
Death Church (Corpus Christi)

Freddy Cannon
The Explosive Freddy Cannon (Philips)

Dean Blunt
Black Metal (Rough Trade)

Aaliyah
Aaliyah (Blackground)

Lou Reed
The Bells (Arista)

Paavoharju
Laulu Laakson Kukista (Fonal)

Compiled by Isobel McKenna, vivariumsounds.bandcamp.com

Dreamhouse Records 15

Niagara
Niagara (Everland)

Mariah
Utakata No Hibi (Everland)

Lisel
Patterns For Auto-Tuned Voices And Delay (Ba Da Bing)

David Holmes
This England OST (Stranger Than Paradise)

Chris & Cosey
Elemental 7 (CTI)

The Bobby Hamilton Quintet Unlimited
Dream Queen (Now-Again)

Herbie Hancock
Empyrean Isles (Blue Note)

Genevieve Artadi
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Shabaka
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ESP Summer
Mars Is A Ten (Disciples)

Joyce with Mauricio Maestro
Natureza (Far Out)

Kate NV
WOW (RVNG Intl)

Adrian Sherwood Presents: Dub No Frontiers
Various (On-U Sound)

Compiled by Jon Clifford, Dreamhouse Records, London, dreamhouseldn.com

15 Songs To Offload Your Humanity Before Recording Seven Hours Of Brutal Guitar Feedback And Noise

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Don Gibson
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Jim Ford
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Compiled by Graham Reznick, whose *The Interconscious Catalogue* LP is released by Library Of The Occult, libraryoftheoccult.bandcamp.com

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New Kingdom
Paradise Don't Come Cheap (Gee Street)

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Compiled from the playlists of *Wire* staff. To hear a stream of our Office Ambience, go to thewire.co.uk. We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, DJs, venues, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email a top 15 to charts@thewire.co.uk – the more unusual the better

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Soundcheck A–Z

New CDs, vinyl, downloads, streams

Adjunct Ensemble
Sovereign Bodies/Ritual Taxonomy
Diatribe DL
It's autumn 2015 and Hungary has just erected a barbed wire fence on its borders, forcing Croatia and Slovenia to help Syrian refugees and allow them free passage to Germany. Around the same time, the Croatian president visits a refugee centre and presses its residents: "Why are you here? Where did you come from?" Irish composer Jamie Thompson's new work encapsulates the same mixture of shame, helplessness, compassion, rage and hope that marked that period. *Sovereign Bodies/Ritual Taxonomy* is a sprawling exploration of Europe's continued heartless treatment of refugees and migrants as told through the words and sounds of his Adjunct Ensemble.

Here, the mercurial group feature poet Felicia Olusanya (FeliSpeaks), soprano Amy Ní Fhearraigh, turntablist Mariam Rezaei, jazz rock trio Taupe, pianist Elliot Galvin, saxophonist Catherine Sikora, bassist John Pope and drummers/percussionists Stephen Davis, Darren Beckett and Oscar Cassidy. Rather than relying on collective performance, Thompson employs distinct approaches, from improvisation and electroacoustic composition to electronic production, with parts of his ensemble, creating layers and samples to be later pieced together. Soprano arias and spoken word are accompanied by subtle electronic flourishes, only to be disintegrated by turntable scratches, while raucous jazz freakouts turn into caustic textures.

With an hour and a half of material spread over four pieces and 20 movements, the resulting collage could have easily crumbled under its own ambition, but Thompson's style is deft and restrained. Compositional choices follow narrative contours, underscoring the hollowness of official platitudes (*"Some might say refugees are a threat to order"*) with percussive intensity, honouring languages and cultures that suffered colonial injustices through soft ambient cues and elevating gut-wrenching phrases (*"They didn't know we couldn't die in silence"*) into poignant hymns. Ultimately, the album is a radical expression of empathy, as stunning as its themes are crushing.
Antonio Poscic

Aksak Maboul
Une Aventure De VV (Songspiel)
Crammed Discs/Made To Measure CD/DL/LP
Formed in 1977, Aksak Maboul arrived in the middle of a bustling scene of chamber prog and Rock In Opposition artists ranging from Belgian compatriots Julverne and Univers Zero to UK based ensembles Henry Cow and Art Bears, with whom they occasionally shared members. The line-up of the revived group revolves around multi-instrumentalist Marc Hollander and lyricist/singer Véronique Vincent.

Like 2020's *Figures*, *Une Aventure De VV* offers a contemporary vision of an idiosyncratic band whose music remains unmistakable even though they never really had a specific sound. If anything, the array of aesthetics that the new album draws from is even broader, encompassing bumpy dance music ("La Tempête", "Dans Les Airs"), vaporwave-evoking modulated synth pieces ("Fable"), electronic chansons ("La Parole De La Peau"), free improv ("L'Ombre Double") and dynamic fusion in the vein of Mahavishnu Orchestra ("Brown Dwarfs"). The gamut of atmospheres is equally disparate, ranging from pop elation and majestic organ stabs to marching piano progressions, often across the span of a single track.

Vincent's lyrics and thespian delivery, alternately deadpan spoken word and stirring singsong, narrate the magical philosophy of a creature in search of language as she engages in conversation with both humans and nonhumans (voiced by guest vocalists like Stereolab's Lætitia Sadier). The tension between segments in French and English and her various inflections are as much of a defining factor here as Hollander's compositions and arrangements. Like the album's subtitle *Songspiel* suggests, together they form an extramusical form – a piece of remarkable sonic theatre incarnated in 15 captivating vignettes.
Antonio Poscic

Ale Hop & Laura Robles
Agua Dulce
Buh DL/LP
Agua Dulce is a project developed from recorded improvisations between Peruvian musicians Alejandra Cárdenas aka Ale Hop on electric guitar and electronics, and Laura Robles on a self-built electric cajón. The title refers to a beach in Lima, the place where both artists lived as children, apparently only houses apart, without ever meeting. Both women are now based in Berlin, and the music they make together on *Agua Dulce* evokes a sense of displacement as it pulls apart the traditional dance rhythms of coastal Peru, deconstructing and mutating familiar cajón patterns like landó, festejo, alcatraz and lamento into sonic textures that highlight the dislocated legacies of Afro-Peruvian music.

It also shines a hard light on the the cajón itself, an instrument developed by Black slaves during Peru's colonial era. Robles demonstrates the instrument's expressive limits with impressive virtuosity and volatile physicality. Cárdenas bridges the gap between past and present, connecting dance music traditions across time and space through imaginative applications of modular effects, allowing the complex associational baggage of personal and political histories the sonic space to air out.

The album opens with the dark and entrancing "Son De Los Diablos", a stubborn, hypnotic groove that subtly morphs shape as clamorous rhythms slip in and out of alignment. It seamlessly slides into the stretched grit of "Lamento", twisting the tempo from taut hesitance to full-blown panic. Danger lurks just under the surface of "Agua Dulce", where watery cymbals, weightless atmospherics and bubbling rhythms give way to violent scrapes and gurgling distorted groans. "Huayco" is an enjoyably elemental conversation between a chunky, distorted groove and what sounds like a manic dentist's drill. Robles stretches out on penultimate track "Fuga En Alcatraz" with an extended solo that is by turns explosive, tender, primal and punishing.
Leah Kardos

CEL
Gegenwelt
Bureau B CD/DL/LP
Gegenwelt is the second collaboration from percussionist Hubert Zemler and electronic musician Felix Kubin, following their 2020 self-titled debut under the CEL banner. By their own admission, Zemler and Kubin formed CEL "to explore the juncture between two streams of German underground sounds" – namely the motorik rhythms of Can et al and the synth-led Neue Deutsche Welle, which respectively originated in the late 1960s and the late 1970s.

This intention is most evident in tracks such as "Trippeltanz" and "Rompecristales", which – like much of their debut album – find common ground between man and machine via Kubin's electronic loops and Zemler's drumming, both characterised by their relentless forward motion.

A new development here is the incorporation of the human voice on "Flucht Zum Mars" and "Eiweißangriff" (which translates, intriguingly, as "Protein Attack"). The first is a creepy howl, the second a barking chant, both of which seem to spur on the playing. There's also a move away from the straightahead minimalism of CEL into more varied song structures. The final track "Transformator Matki Polki" is the only one without a consistent motorik rhythm, instead allowing space for subtler electronic beeps and cowbell flutters to mirror each other. It's a different take on the project's conceit, but there's nothing much to it, and it resembles any number of sparse sound experiments from electroacoustic groups.

For all these relative developments, *Gegenwelt* has the same core problem as the duo's debut outing: it lacks depth and interest in its own right, and its central concept isn't

Pianist and composer Jason Moran's tribute to jazz pioneer James Reese Europe reveals the multidirectional nature of history

By David Grundy

Europe endless: Jason Moran

Jason Moran
From The Dancehall To The Battlefield
Bandcamp DL

James Reese Europe was one of the major figures in the musical currents that came to be known as jazz: pianist, composer, conductor; founder of the Clef Club, a combined union, publishing organisation and performance series for Black musicians; leader of the first Black orchestra to play at Carnegie Hall; and of the immensely successful Harlem Hellfighters band stationed in France during the First World War. His career was cut short in untimely fashion when he was killed by one of his own band members after an argument about pay, months after returning from Europe. His story is little known to contemporary listeners. Now Jason Moran's new tribute *From The Dancehall To The Battlefield* offers welcome attention to his work.

Moran comes to Europe from a line of pianists. He recalls that Randy Weston sat him down for a conversation about Europe's importance. Weston had in turn learned about him from his friends Luckey Roberts and Eubie Blake when he was a young musician in Harlem, while Europe himself was taught violin by Frederick Douglass's grandson. These are histories both tangible and intangible, some of which Moran outlines in a powerful spoken word introduction. But they are also heard in the music itself. There's a line of influence from early syncopated music such as that of Europe to the jazz modernisms that followed: the stride piano that cuts like a knife through Thelonious Monk's left hand, Mary Lou Williams's or Dave Burrell's refiguration of the legacies of boogie woogie and ragtime. Rather than casting such influence as backwards looking or nostalgic, Moran is interested in the way a music like Europe's looks forward. History cuts both ways.

Over the 15 tracks comprising *From The Dancehall To The Battlefield*, Moran offers more or less faithful arrangements and rearrangements of Europe's work (including a haunting solo version of the fascinatingly ambiguous wartime piece "All Of No Man's Land Is Ours") along with songs he performed – three WC Handy classics and Carl D Bethel's "That Moaning Trombone". Elsewhere, however, Moran adopts the logic of the medley, the suite and the remix, following Europe's own way of arranging and rearranging material, ranging from popular classical pieces by Dvořák to tangos, waltzes and foxtrots: an ethos that's syncretic and transformative, unbowed by generic boundaries. The second track, for instance, segues from a trio performance of Europe's "Ballin' The Jack" to the late Geri Allen's "Feed The Fire" and then back into "Ballin'", now slowed down, arranged for big band, and given some characteristically Moran-ian harmonic twists. On the closer "For James" Moran collages together recordings from different sources, incorporating an audience singalong into two different studio recordings; and on "Drop (Tear)" and "St Louis Blues", he deploys discrete electronics in a vein that he has previously linked to the influence of DJ Screw.

"Russian Rag", written by George Cobb and performed by The Harlem Hellfighters, offers a playful refiguration of Rachmaninoff's *Prelude In C-Sharp Minor* – one that would later be echoed by Charles Mingus in his mash-up of "All The Things You Are" and its prelude, "All The Things You C Sharp". In Moran's rearrangement, the piece in turn falls into free playing – all scampering piano and woozily honking horns, before collapsing into electronically slowed drums that wind down into a mournfully ambiguous final chord like a collapsing clock. Here, Moran incorporates elements of the later New Thing avant garde that, in its own way, harked back to something older than Europe's 1920s modernism: a spiritual tradition of defiance and existential reckoning. Perhaps most notably, on the album's sixth track Albert Ayler's "Ghosts" turns up folded into an arrangement of the traditional hymn "Flee As A Bird To Your Mountain", a song written while Europe recuperated in a field hospital from a gas attack.

The Harlem Hellfighters band used to play "Flee As A Bird" when a soldier failed to return from the battlefield. In Moran's version, mourning also shades over into defiance, the song adapted as an anthem for Black survival as well as a lament for the parade of death. Moran describes Brian Settles's fierce tenor solo as evoking the soldier fighting for a last breath; yet, in tapping into the "Holy Ghost" register of Albert Ayler, the solo also suggests the spirit that continues beyond the end of the material body, a millenarian tradition that, in facing terror, promises redemption: the New Black music as a reckoning with horror and utopian placeholder alike.

As *From The Dancehall To The Battlefield* shows, music about history doesn't have to pretend that history is a fixed entity. "When we talk about history," Moran asks, "do we think that it got solved because time passed? That's incorrect. Time does not solve it." And as he remarks in the introduction, Europe's use of syncopation was a way of "pushing the beat ahead... an outlook that is inherently futuristic". Such music is a way of mixing up time, refusing to stick to the predetermined or the known. Time does not solve history, but music's remaking of time might nonetheless challenge its relentless onward momentum, refusing to move in a straight line, dancing behind or ahead of the beat, imagining another world. ○

Patrick McBride

all that exciting to begin with. Tracks like "Geometrischer Glanz" are successful as technical exercises, fusing two musical forms together, but the result is trundling and bland, where its roots were exciting and fresh. Why not just listen to Can instead? File *Gegenwelt* along with *CEL* under technical exercises more fulfilling for the makers than the listeners.
Claire Biddles

Buck Curran
Delights And Dangers Of Ambiguity (Improvisations 2017–2022)
Obsolete DL
Prometheus
Obsolete DL
Immortal Light
Ramble DL/LP
Solstice: A Tribute To Steffen Basho-Junghans
Various
Obsolete DL

If you need to track down an acoustic guitarist, call Buck Curran. He's quite the connected guy, a handy quality when it comes to compiling tribute albums that honour deceased fellow pickers. *Solstice*, his third such endeavour, celebrates Steffen Basho-Junghans, who died in December 2022. The German's remarkable legacy rests not just upon his being first and foremost among the guitarists who have adopted aspects of Robbie Basho's techniques, but also for devising some sui generis experimental methods of his own.

Among the 21 players from three continents who join Curran on *Solstice* are those like Nick Jonah Davis, who nail some aspect of Basho-Junghans's playing, and others like Henry Kaiser who honour his exploratory spirit by sounding nothing like him. While this music is often characterised as a primarily American phenomenon, it would disrespect the honoree's transcendence of national boundaries if all the contributors held US passports, so it's a significant virtue that this set introduces lesser known European players like Jakub Šimanský and Pino Nuvola. Sampler compilations loom large in the acoustic guitar subculture; if this one ever attains physical form, it could honorably share shelf space with Takoma's *Contemporary Guitar* and Locust's *Wooden Guitar*.

Curran's recent releases attest to his own eclecticism. His first solo LP *Immortal Light*, which has just been reissued on vinyl by the Australian imprint Ramble, is an extension of the featherlight cosmic folk that Curran once fashioned in Arborea, the defunct ensemble he co-led with singer Shanti Deschaine, who appears on the album's epic closing track. If one can hang with the material's unabashed earnestness, Curran's exquisitely structured arrangements yield substantial rewards.

Delights And Dangers on the other hand is a collection of openended fantasias that derive an otherworldly vibe from spacy, E-bowed electric guitars and a rickety sounding piano. Even without words to convey them, Curran puts sentiment on display – "Prelude In D Minor" is as boldly melodramatic as prime Morricone. "Prometheus", a teaser track for an as yet unfinished album that will explore Curran's Scottish and Irish roots, augurs change – it is totally electronic, bringing to mind such 20th century soundtrackers as Popol Vuh and Tangerine Dream.
Bill Meyer

Fire-Toolz
I Am Upset Because I See Something That Is Not There
Hausu Mountain CD/DL/MC

Fire-Toolz is among the most widely recognised of producer and composer Angel Marcloid's myriad aliases. Originally from Maryland, she now lives and works in an Illinois hinterzone she calls the "Chicagoland boonies". I envision it as an open world space of lysergic supernature and billboard hypervistas, sacred flora, alien fauna. The reality is probably more prosaic, but it's hard not to picture Marcloid somewhere magical: a world she's in and of but has also, to some extent, built.

I Am Upset Because I See Something That Is Not There is Marcloid's fifth Fire-Toolz album for Hausu Mountain, a label whose aesthetic aligns near perfectly with her drivetime, dreamtime dreampop convulsed by jags of bedroom mathcore and flayed metal. Opener "It's Happening Again (Thank You Council Of Saturn)" fuses an incongruously effervescent noodling jazz rock melody with breakbeats in frenzied time signatures and demonic shrieking. For some approximation, try to imagine Ugandan cybergrind duo Duma paying tribute to Level 42.

Although divergent fusions like these appear frequently enough, much of the album will follow one or the other tendency further – dissonant fury or smooth arena hypnagogia. "The Great Allower", featuring Curt Oren on alternatingly angular and circuitous saxophone, showcases some of the album's most ballistic angular hardcore, calling to mind Converge or, in line with their penchant for jazz fusion, Candiria. Tracks like "Inlet/Paraklesis", "A Thin Place" and at least part of "Above All Else I Want To See" represent the album's atonal noise collage and quasi-industrial psychedelia.

Elsewhere, the likes of "Paraclete Bhishajyati" and "Novaturient Wave-Form Collapse" give free reign to Marcloid's AOR proclivities. As a yacht rock sceptic, I should cringe. Instead, I'm struck by her deeply charismatic and defiantly anti-glib willingness to soar with the wind in her hair.
James Gormley

Josephine Foster
Domestic Sphere
Fire CD/DL/LP

A hugely beguiling transmission from Tennessee based musician and songwriter Josephine Foster, with only an electric guitar providing conventional chord patterns and music. The rest of the mix here is a multitracked imaginative reconfiguration of birdsong, buzzing insects, animals, the creak of furniture and of course Foster's voice, multitracked, sped up and slowed down, interlacing itself into all kinds of startling shapes and patterns, particularly on the hypnotic, homespun, otherworldly likes of "Entr'acte" and "Reminiscence".

From the moment "Entrance" walks you into her domicile, Foster has a wonderfully un-hierarchical attitude towards sound and her own authorship. She sings over guitar in a way that recalls Juni Habel's *Carvings* – but as soon as you think you're in a traditional place of listening she lets birdsong from a flung-open door take over. Immediately it's clear that this is not your standard singer-songwriter record. "Pendulum" and "Dawn Of Time" make the listener a witness to this musical verite and target of Foster's spell, as lines and details are echoed and dubbed in enfolding waves. That mix of exterior sonics and interior voice makes *Domestic Sphere* simultaneously familiar and unsettling. In a world of singers intent on coming at you from the heart, Foster is smart enough to come at you with heart, soul, home and hearth intact.

Beyond the superficial sonic intrigue of what she and collaborator Daniel Blumberg have crafted, *Domestic Sphere* emerges with a more resonant and deeper set of questions about what music is, and how it mingles with our living spaces and our lives, which brings the album as close to morning raga, spiritually, as anything found in Western music.
Neil Kulkarni

Steve Gunn & David Moore
Let The Moon Be A Planet
RVNG Intl CD/DL/LP
amby downs & Steve Gunn
Looming Change/Building Fabric
Longform Editions DL

Steve Gunn has spent the last decade evolving from being a great guitarist who also sang to an evocative singer-songwriter who happened to play a mean guitar. If "New Moon", the opening track of his 2019 LP *The Unseen In Between*, represented the acme of his songcraft, it also posed a dilemma: what's next? Gunn switched from steel string to classical guitar on its meandering successor *Other You*, a move that softened his sound but also took some of the wind out of his sails. Two new instrumental recordings, however, suggest that drifting may be exactly what Gunn wants to do.

Keyboardist David Moore helms Bing & Ruth, a flexibly configured ambient ensemble. He and Gunn commenced their collaboration by exchanging sound files, to which each could respond however they chose. The duo seem to have found common cause in a process of distillation, both of means and material. Gunn sticks to acoustic guitar and Moore to piano, and while they have characterised their process as improvisational, they consistently gravitate to complementary textures and shy melodies. The album's eight tracks meander, but they never get lost. "Basin" for example sounds like Brian Eno's *Music For Airports* might if it were scaled down to be played in an apartment hallway instead of a spacious terminal.

Looming Change/Building Fabric, on the other hand, could not feel more expansive. It is a response by Gunn and Australian sound artist amby downs to Sol LeWitt's *Wall drawing #955, Loopy Doopy (red and purple)*, which is installed at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Gunn once worked as LeWitt's assistant, and this personal dimension may explain the

music's radiant warmth. It begins with a series of long electronic tones that are hard to source, but easy to enjoy, and then acquires grit over its 40 minute passage from the filigree of Gunn's classical guitar and his collaborator's recordings of creaking doors and distant vehicles. The result is both sonically and emotionally complex. If Gunn is still looking for new directions, he could do far worse than to pursue this one for a spell.
Bill Meyer

Mats Gustafsson & Joachim Nordwall
Their Power Reached Across Space And Time – To Defy Them Was Death – Or Worse
Thrill Jockey CD/DL/LP
The third duo encounter between Swedish musicians Mats Gustafsson and Joachim Nordwall explores the outer reaches of their respective musical languages. Those expecting to hear Gustafsson's brand of free jazz skronk (The Thing, Fire!), or Nordwall's dub experiments (The iDEALIST) and freewheeling noise rock (The Skull Defekts), best look elsewhere. *Their Power* is a collection of liminal miniatures, engrossingly cinematic and unnervingly abstract at the same time.

The album's cuts owe more than just their titles to US sci-fi author Cordwainer Smith. Akin to his uncanny yet poetic transhumanist short stories, the pieces distil pockets of ominous atmosphere into minimal reed and electronic dialogues, and evolve them into unrecognisable forms. Forget extended techniques, Gustafsson's saxophone seldom sounds like an actual woodwind here, while Nordwall's analogue electronics alternate between sinister background textures and shapeless leads. The opener "There Are Some Worlds Where All Dreams Die" undulates with profound rumble while herds of percussive knocks and breathy gurgles pass by. On "The Day Of Days Was There", Gustafsson assembles wheezes, key clanks and tongue clicks into whispers, then makes them dance between spikes of effects that sound like 8-bit missiles going off in the *Scorched Earth* game.

Meanwhile, the burrowing ambient drone and laser rays synths of "Their New Life Was Their Final Life" make for a juncture of ugly beauty, harkening back to the duo's 2017 record *A Map Of Guilt*. From that point, the music becomes increasingly haunting and disquieting. Any semblance of saxophone

Prolific Pennsylvanian producer Nondi_ locates poignancy in velocity

By Britt Brown

Nondi_
Flood City Trax
Planet Mu DL
In recent years the electronic music world's fixation with so-called deconstructed club music has finally ebbed to a murmur. Perhaps it's because the concept has been so thoroughly rinsed, or maybe the pandemic effectively decommissioning the club as an active reference point made the notion feel redundant.

Another possible factor is the ascension and current renaissance of footwork, for which deconstruction is less an artistic statement than a starting point. Its sound is both radical and radicalising, contagious with the liberation of disassembly. Though its roots stretch back to the late 1990s, the 2010s saw the style explode in prominence and variety. Planet Mu's canonical *Bangs & Works* compilations seeded a fascination with footwork's frenetic energy in wider geographies and younger generations, which in turn fostered the rise of next wave torchbearers like Jlin and Jana Rush. Prolific US producer Tatiana Triplin aka Nondi_ both expands and explodes this lineage, mining the mode for hidden poignancies while gleefully derailing it with kinetic curiosity.

Flood City Tracks marks Triplin's formal debut after a decade of web-only collections for her netlabel HRR, issued via a range of aliases: Yakui (her main moniker before Nondi_), Clawface, Fuuka ASMR, Mrs Aguyi, BGS (Beans Gravy And Syrup), Riteskeeper, Bit Defender and Crushing Union (a duo with Laura C). The album takes its title from her hometown of Johnstown City, Pennsylvania, which earned the sobriquet due to its century-long history of devastating floods – 1894, 1899, 1907, 1924, 1936, 1977 – the last of which her family suffered through and survived. Triplin characterises Johnston City as a place still in the shadow of its tragic past, and her music as evocative of the mood of "living in a town like Johnstown, and more broadly the isolation of poverty".

Her tracks here refashion footwork from dance mania to melancholic reverie, its dizzy frenzies shaded with a pensive undertow. Opener "FCD (Floaty Cloud Dream)" and "Nondi Shadow" trace memory-smeared melodies of vaporous software with twitchy percussion and pointillist bass, evoking some lost juke rework of Boards Of Canada's *Music Has The Right To Children*. On "Healing Rain" rickety mechanical clattering and bitcrushed bleeps are gradually shrouded in candlelit jazz keys; "Dusty" too achieves a heady fusion of spasmodic and soothing, pitting a skittering rhythm against a beautifully noir synth descent, like night falling once and for all on a haunted city. Only "01-25-2022" sticks to a more traditional footwork framework, asymmetrically pummelling a shrill vocal sample into oblivion across two minutes.

Levee breaks: Nondi_

Much of Triplin's past work overlaps with (and self-identifies as) nightcore, an internet driven inverse chopped and screwed style where source material is sped up instead of slowed. But *Flood City Tracks* is revelatory for how it finds the fragility in fastness, the desperation in acceleration. Prior to this collection, the most recent Nondi_ offering was a six-track release from February called *loners attitude*. The title applies to Triplin's palette, process and muse. Hers is a music of escape and salvation, forged alone and from minimal means, imagined as much as experienced, fuelled by boredom, yearning and online community, forever dreaming of worlds away. ○

Tatiana Triplin

licks disperses with panicked panting, while electronics switch from 1970s/80s horror and giallo mise en scène – equal parts John Carpenter and Dario Argento – to technological dread, embodied in the hum of ground loops and flicks of spectral noise. Even as its final growls disappear, the album lingers on, its tentacles buried deep in the limbic cortex.
Antonio Poscic

JPEGMAFIA & Danny Brown
Scaring The Hoes
PEGGY/Awal CD/DL/LP
Some may remember the Reese's Peanut Butter Cups ad, "Two great tastes that taste great together." Yes, peanut butter and chocolate are a terrific combination, partly because we know what to expect. And so it goes when two established personalities join forces for fun and profit, in this case rapper Danny Brown and rapper/producer JPEGMAFIA. Brown has earned renown for over a decade of splatterpunk raps that mine his substance abuse and *"scrap or die"* philosophy towards life and survival. JPEGMAFIA twists laptop noise, oddball samples and satirical lyrics into a distinct fusillade that evokes the internet sensorium.

On *Scaring The Hoes*, Brown and Peggy sound great together while offering few artistic revelations. "Lean Beef Patty" hammers along on bass drops and hyperpop-style vocal loops as Brown starts *"spitting fast like Busta"*. Peggy begins the title track by declaring, *"Stop scaring the hoes!/Play that shit that have them touch they toes!/We don't want to hear that weird shit no more!/What the fuck is that, give me back my aux cord!"*. Indeed, anyone who thinks *Scaring The Hoes* is "weird" hasn't been to a EDM festival lately. And for the extremely online, there are pleasures to be had, from the salutary trumpets of "Burfict!" to the way Peggy uses the word *"cracker"* profusely and claims he's the Black Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the Black Marjorie Taylor-Greene. One track is called "Jack Harlow Combo Meal". Another is titled, perhaps more sincerely, "Run The Jewels", and builds around LL Cool J's "Going Back To Cali".

Every track seems to tremble with tweaked out bass and slurry samples, some more recognisable than others. "God Loves You" is like an outtake from Kanye West's *The Life Of Pablo*, albeit without the rich man's spiritual angst. In fact, there's not much subtext at all, at least none immediately apparent amid the squall. Nothing to do but turn your brain off and bang your head.
Mosi Reeves

Kaze & Ikue Mori
Crustal Movement
Circum/Libra CD/DL
If lockdown was a challenge for all musicians, improvisors were hit particularly hard, forced to swap the immediacy of being in a room together for bitrate, latency and distance. However resourceful the workarounds, it's questionable how much appetite remains for hearing the results now that gigs and group recording sessions have resumed. An exception can be made for this album, however, which reprises the meeting of international quartet Kaze with DNA drummer turned laptop musician Ikue Mori from their 2020 release *Sand Storm* in different circumstances.

It's unclear over what period these six tracks came together, but the process suggests one of those uncertain in between times from the last three years. Each member took turns to chart out trajectories and timings, then Mori, pianist Satoko Fujii and trumpeter Natsuki Tamura all recorded files at home, which drummer Peter Orins and trumpet/flugenhorn player Christian Pruvost then added parts to live at a concert in Lille. While the pair don't quite create – and may not have been aiming for – the illusion of simultaneity, the results are nowhere near as stiff and reactive as can happen when the listening only flows one way.

In "Rolle Cake", Tamura and Pruvost's instruments egg each other on to a frenzy of chromatic snuffling; in "Motion Dynamics" strangled squeals disrupt muted jazz lyricism. Orins often works to complement Mori's signature insectoid chirps and twinkling high frequency gems, favouring light, skittering circuits of the kit, while the ever versatile Fujii ranges from ethereal harpsichord-like sweeps inside the piano to purposeful, driving chords on the lower keys.

Despite an abundance of satisfyingly high nutrient sounds – at times fizzing, fruity, sputtering or bovine – *Crustal Movement* never feels overstuffed; even when all five play at once, each finds their own pitch, rhythmic or timbral place in the mesh. It's undoubtedly a different kind of space occupied to that on *Sand Storm*, but one which the group and Mori collectively make their own.
Abi Bliss

Brandon Lopez Trio
Matanzas
Relative Pitch CD/DL
The first track on *Matanzas*, "Dithyramb, Sodomy, Salt", opens with cavernous arcing basslines, lowing or screaming tenor saxophone and a tumbling, rolling momentum on drums. The tempo – or maybe, given there's no definite groove, the activity level – increases. After about ten minutes, the bassist picks up his bow as the saxophone slithers and the drums quieten. The track ends entropically, with bass and saxophone entwined in rich counterpoint, while drums present a subdued out of kilter groove.

I'd guess that this is a characteristic performance by New York based bassist and composer Brandon Lopez, born 1988 – not that this fertile and characterful improvisor has any set pattern. He works at the intersections of jazz, free improv, metal and noise, and has collaborated with John Zorn, Okkyung Lee, Tyshawn Sorey and Sun Ra's Arkestra. *Matanzas* features his trio with Steve Baczkowski (saxophones) and Gerald Cleaver (percussion), and draws from heavy metal as well as free jazz, though the latter remains the dominant influence.

The album is named after one of Cuba's largest provinces, though there's little hint of Cuban music here. It was recorded live at a concert in the old church that now functions as the venue 2223 Fish, in Philadelphia's Fishtown neighbourhood. There are two long and spontaneously improvised performances, totalling around 40 minutes, and the dominant mood is dark, brutal and unrelenting.

The second and longer track "Gomorrah, Philadelphia" is more fragmented and discursive than "Dithyramb". In a fierce opening, Baczkowski's saxophone is stentorian, against rattling percussion and bass pizzicato. A squeaky gate episode follows that gradually evolves into a macabre military march tempo, featuring Baczkowski's huge saxophone sound. In the track's second half, Cleaver sets up varying jazz rock grooves, and there's a final intense crescendo. A full-on, compelling release from a fertile and boundary pushing label.
Andy Hamilton

Annelies Monseré
Mares
Horn Of Plenty DL/LP
Nein Rodere
Form & Feeling
Horn Of Plenty DL/LP
Two new albums from the London label Horn Of Plenty spotlight a pair of solo artists shaping and refining their own idiosyncratic soundworlds. *Mares*, by Ghent, Belgium based musician Annelies Monseré, takes as its conceptual starting point "Sally Free And Easy", a song by the 20th century English folk musician Cyril Tawney that's since become a standard, covered by numerous artists including Pentangle and Flying Saucer Attack. The song tells the tale of a carefree young woman whose brief dalliance with a smitten sailor drives him to suicide.

Monseré rightly identifies the lyric as "slutshaming". In her hands the song is recast as something soft and almost hymnal, the original's bitter judgement drained away and replaced with gentle empathy. Elsewhere, droning harmonium, pared with Monseré's minimalist sensibility, brings to mind the flinty despair of Nico's *Desertshore*. But "Shells" and "My Finest Hour" skilfully walk the line between desolation and beauty, both carefully layered and imbued with a sense of relaxed drift.

The Scotland bred, Berlin based musician David Rodere's third album on Horn Of Plenty has a conceptual theme too, inspired by *Feeling And Form*, a work by the philosopher Susanne Langer exploring the way that art is understood and processed by the human mind. Rodere's music in some ways conforms to familiar songwriting tenets – sober meditations on existence sung in English and occasionally German, all delivered with a sense of dry affect. "Zelerweg" and "Bristletown" are rooted in a sort of quotidian gloom, combining bare, stripped back instrumentation with a boombox fidelity that brings to mind the lonely early outings of Smog or Palace Brothers.

Around the record's more song-focused moments, Rodere assembles fragments of found sound and environmental recordings – public service announcements, poltergeist rattles, a melancholy saxophone wailing through wind noise, as if captured pealing

DIY psych punk Dez Dare pits sledgehammer riffs and lo-fi electronics against a world of monsters

By Edwin Pouncey

Perseid hustle: Dez Dare

Dez Dare
Perseus War
CH!MP CD/DL/LP

In Greek mythology Perseus was a hero and slayer of monsters, famously responsible for decapitating Medusa, the fearsome Gorgon whose gaze could turn flesh into stone. *Perseus War* is the third album from UK based Australian psych punk and one-man band Dez Dare aka Darren Smallman, and it sounds as though he is following the example of the mythological figure he has summoned up by attempting to slay (or at least spotlight) several 21st century monsters that are currently plaguing the world – and his own personal space. Corrupt politicians, the threat of nuclear war, aimless consumerism and global warming are just a few of the ugly heads Smallman takes a swing at here, accompanied by the scree of his damaged guitar and pneumatic beatbox.

Originally intended to be a follow-up EP to his 2022 release *Ulysses Trash* (which he described as "a call to inaction") *Perseus War* is more concerned with survival and the pressure of existence, along with an almost beatific acknowledgement of the destruction that is falling around us and an understanding that much of what's happening now is beyond our control anyway. Smallman's message could be read as bleak prophecy – albeit one dynamically armed with a ten-pronged set of lyrical barbs and musical hooks that, once heard, sink deep and hold fast. What lifts it out of total despair, however, is his surrealistic humour and psychedelically marinated mindset, both of which surface magnificently on "A Chimp, A Tricycle, New World Order", a raw grooved rant where he grafts Mothers circa *Freak Out*-style fuzz on to Hawkwind's silver machine and jumpstarts it into action.

Further sonic madness lays in wait on "My Heels + My Toes, My Lies + My Nose" as sledgehammer riffing crashes down over an evenly paced Neanderthal beat, intermittently interrupted by blooping synths and Smallman's robopunk vocalising. Elsewhere, on "Beach!" he growls over bloated, sunburnt bodies stretched out along the shingled beach in Brighton (the seaside city Smallman now calls home), before heading off for the nearest pub – only to become temporarily lost in a hallucinogenic maze of distorted guitars, squawking gulls and cracked wind chimes. Unsettling and almost Ballardian, the holiday in the sun portrayed here is seriously no fun. Likewise the autistic meltdown detailed in "Ouch!". Here Smallman vividly evokes the condition he lives with via a stinging repeated guitar riff and a yelped recitation emitted from inside a swirling electronic fog.

Perseus War crashes out Devo style with "Stop. Stop. Stop. Talking." where Smallman grapples with the concept of personal freedom and a search for one's inner self which seems to partly rotate around an ongoing obsession with otters. *"It's time to let go of control"*, he suggests, adding *"stop talking so much"*. Enough said. ○

from the mouth of a nearby subway. The ever-present tape hiss has a unifying quality, threading together *Form & Feeling*'s disparate parts while wreathing the whole thing in murky enigma. The result feels like a deeply personal record designed to be consumed at a slight remove; to be understood as a series of question marks.
Louis Pattison

Drew Mulholland
Through The Glass Darkly
Human Geography DL/MC

It doesn't help this seeping slab of darkness has been accompanying a reading of Nigel Kneale's novelisation of his dread-filled 1979 *Quatermass* series – but I wouldn't want to wander in the labyrinthine dankness of Drew Mulholland's imagination after dark, alone. It's a shit-scary place.

I was made aware of Glasgow based composer Mulholland – proprietor of Mount Vernon Arts Lab – via his *Warminster UFO Club* set, a chillingly atmospheric look at one of the most eerie incidents in British 20th century weird. *Through The Glass Darkly* seems less hitched to a particular incident, more informed by a deeply cinematic dreamscape of horror, pulling from centuries of occult suggestion and dangerous dabbling. I passed the headphones to my daughter, a big horror fan, and watched her eyes widen. She passed them back immediately. "Take them back. I'm sorry I heard that."

It's so damn creepy. Opener "Has Anyone Here Seen Keeley?" manages to stay, for over nine minutes, in a place part musical, part miasmic, almost stochastic. I'm reminded of Iannis Xenakis's most morbid visions, in the hints of organic and geologic sedimentation going on as the waves of brackish sound accrete themselves into an overwhelming sense of being buried alive. The title track starts with Borley Rectory-style rustles and MR Jamesian half-seen movement before nightmarish subterranean rumbles and horrific elements of pointillist detail (I swear I shrieked at the sound of a distant bell) set your heart on a tremulous tightrope of trepidation. "Messengers For Dee No No No" is sound as scrying, pure Enochian disturbance conjured through mesmeric bell loops and murmurs.

Throughout this deeply unsettling set Mulholland shows an uncanny familiarity with the true feeling of supernatural experience, putting it way beyond the traditional cliches of horror music. A truly terrifying listen.
Neil Kulkarni

Mat Muntz
Phantom Islands
Orenda CD/DL

On *Phantom Islands*, Mat Muntz leads his microtonal free jazz sextet through "haunted geographies", the nonexistent landmasses recorded on old maps. With a magical realist flourish, he connects these with real places and traditions: Croatia, Bahrain, Okinawa. Like his Vex Collection bandmate Vicente Hansen Atria, Muntz is concerned with placing various folk traditions in an experimental music context, exploring the relationships between non-Western tuning systems, free jazz and the avant garde.

Muntz's main weapon of choice is the primorski meh, a Croatian bagpipe with a distinctive bleating sound. Set against the more refined timbres of Xavier Del Castillo's

Courtesy CH!MP

tenor saxophone, Pablo O'Connell's oboe and Yuma Uesaka's clarinets, the bagpipes create some striking textures. Alec Goldfarb's retuned guitar a further layer of harmonic tension. That slightly off quality – at least to Western ears – is a large part of this music's appeal. There's a satisfying free jazz and avant rock crunch to the music, with a strangeness that is positively thrilling.

"Džig No 1" rocks with a deconstructive energy, as Muntz's bagpipes cut across Goldfarb's oblique clusters and drummer Michael Larocca's driving syncopations. The other reeds spin in and out of the theme, adding to the sense of controlled wildness. The seasick sway of "Three Mirages, Small Town Blues" evokes both Eastern European folk and modal jazz, with the ship running aground in the final minutes, its beams splitting into abstract percussive splinters.

"May The Sea Be His Grave" takes a detour to Bahrain, with a beautiful passage inspired by the songs of the pearl divers, while the closing "Obokuri" recasts the shima-uta singing of Ikue Asazaki as free jazz, with Muntz blowing over Larocca's roiling drums. Muntz weaves the melody around a mid-range drone, working over phrases to release fluttering overtones.

Stewart Smith

Pascal Niggenkemper
Blòc
Subram 6xCD/DL

Blòc is the first release in five years by Pascal Niggenkemper. The Paris based, Franco-German bassist has worked as a sideman, leader, soloist and free improvisor with a substantial list of associates that includes Gerald Cleaver, Joachim Badenhorst, Weasel Walter and Frantz Loriot. It includes music recorded between 2017–22, which is even more diverse in character than that found in his discography up to this point.

The box, which can also be purchased as separate CDs or as downloads, conveys Niggenkemper's acute attention to perspectives. The sleevenotes to some of them describe the spatial relationships between musicians and amplifiers. For example, on *La Valée De L'étrange* (*Uncanny Valley*), a recital for one hand-played and one motorised double bass, they indicate that he plays surrounded by eight speakers. Additionally, he finds himself in the middle of a feedback circuit between the small pickups on his instruments, the sounds coming from inside the basses and the speakers that play back those sounds. *Beat The Odds* expands the approach of *La Valée* to include three other instrumentalists, who use motorised devices and outboard effects to make their low strings emit sounds like tectonic events. The musicians sit facing each other, with their amps at their backs and the audience ringed around them. And for *Levar Lenga*, which sets texts in the Occitan language to music that morphs between rough edged folk, distorted textural explorations and manic rock, the music was presented outdoors, with the musicians deployed in a series of concentric squares of acoustic and electric instrumentation, and dancers in the middle. These spatial arrangements influence interactions between players, sounds and listeners.

Other volumes imply a political angle. Niggenkemper is joined by eight vocalists, once more singing in Occitan, on *Vèrs Revèrs*. Occitan is a regional language that has endured in Southern France for hundreds of years despite robust efforts to suppress it. Given Niggenkemper's international background – he's lived in Germany, France and the USA – one imagines that its resilience may mean something to him. But if the texts tell us what it is, they only do so in Occitan. Still, you don't have to understand a word to be transfixed by the performers' uninhibited but intricately orchestrated exchanges.

Bill Meyer

Alva Noto
Kinder Der Sonne
Noton CD/DL/2xLP

Created as an accompaniment to *Komplizen*, playwright Simon Stone's take on two Maxim Gorky plays, *Children Of The Sun* (1905) and *Enemies* (1906), Carsten Nicolai's agile soundtrack negotiates plenty of ground. Gorky, who wrote the former imprisoned during the 1905 Russian revolution, set it in a generic mid-19th century during a cholera outbreak; Stone's adaptation opened on the Vienna stage in 2021, with the Covid-19 pandemic close enough to cause problems. Stone, as with Gorky, locates the action among self-satisfied bourgeoisie, too smug and too deaf to hear the rumblings from below that speak of both revolution and infection.

Nicolai captures Gorky's sense of underlying threat well. The double LP begins with "Kinder Der Sonne", an instrumental for electronics and atmospheres split into two sections, an intro and reprise. The intro is all washes of sound, some far-off piano, a few sonic glitches and atmospheres like clouds of sighs. A tiny click of a pulse runs beneath the track. The reprise continues with this airy broodiness before fading out, very gradually, into a nothing that evokes a dissolution of self and of intent. This is, however, not a balm that Nicolai allows either the characters on stage or his listeners. "Virus" moves quietly, but there is a flickering riff that makes one think of electronic insects creeping through the speakers. Conjuring all the menace possible within a drone, the electronics of "Unwohl" grow into a swarming density before dissipating. The drama of this tactic is repeated with even greater intensity on "Nie Anhaltender Strom" ("The Neverending Stream") where sinister hisses and ticking underpin a growing cloud of sound.

For all these passages of ultra-dynamic sound, much of *Kinder Der Sonne* is expressed in subtle terms. Titles denote uncertainty and inchoate wanting: "Unwohl" ("Queasy"), "Ungewiss" ("Vague"), "Sehnsuchtsvoll" ("Longing" or "Yearning"). The latter is carefully slow, moving towards its end on a single tone. It has an ambivalent, complex quality, something in its calm and soothing tones that is forever out of reach. As with the album overall, the feeling is that there's no easy dose to cure the problems here.

Louise Gray

The Orb
Prism
Cooking Vinyl CD/DL/LP

When I saw The Orb playing live a few years ago, it was a bittersweet occasion: a room full of conspicuously sober, middle-aged ex-ravers exchanging apologetic glances that said, "Best not go mad, work in the morning." Not to put too fine a point on it, The Orb were, at least in the early days, all about the drugs. Their 1990 single "Little Fluffy Clouds" was an impossibly hopeful anthem for those witnessing the Second Summer of Love coalescing into a post-acid house, ecstasy-fuelled rave counterculture.

Along with The KLF's *Chill Out*, The Orb's 1991 debut album *The Orb's Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld* was the blissed out soundtrack to a million afterparty come down sessions: tracks like "Star 6 & 7 8 9" and "Spanish Castles In Space" were extended trips designed to be luxuriated in, eyes closed, amazed. Notwithstanding a lengthy dalliance with minimal techno, The Orb have always returned to this kind of Home Counties head music and this latest album – their 18th, and the third by the duo of founder Alex Paterson and Michael Rendall – tries valiantly to recapture some of that magic. The first half of its ten minute opening track "HOME High Orbs Mini Earths" is all wafting ambience over a list poem casting a *Koyaanisqatsi*-like eye over Earth. The closing title track is a full ten minutes of ethereal synth drift. Tucked between these are a couple of neat facsimiles of the kind of mellow handclap bounce heard on Dance Floor Corporation's scene-setting 1990 *Ambient House* compilation.

But there are some clunkers too. "A Ghetto Love Story" is tame reggae that's more Madness than Mad Professor. "Tiger" is bafflingly nondescript dancefloor R&B. "Living In Recycled Times" is slightly less dire: a mid-90s drum 'n' bass roller with meaty bass squelch, which gives way to a four minute kosmische coda of lonely Hardanger fiddle, corny US TV samples and R2-D2 noises. Though far too brief, it's exactly the sort of excursion The Orb should be making more of. Somebody skin up for Christ's sake.

Daniel Spicer

Oval
Romantiq
Thrill Jockey CD/DL/LP

Markus Popp's latest project explores the ideas and aesthetics of 19th century Romanticism via his uniquely prismatic, process based approach to music and sound. *Romantiq* was developed from an audiovisual collaboration with digital artist Robert Seidel to mark the opening of the German Romantic Museum in Frankfurt.

To complement the visuals projected on to the exterior of the building, Popp created short vignettes that explored the defining aesthetics of the Romantic era, not only with audio sourced from period instruments and classical music tropes, but also incorporating ideas drawn from literature, architecture and other artistic traditions. These sketches were fleshed out to become what we hear on *Romantiq*, a delicate, ornate and fragrant

Composers Alex Paxton and galen tipton combat gloom with playfulness, colour and movement

By Julian Cowley

Alex Paxton
Happy Music For Orchestra
Delphian CD/DL
galen tipton
Brain Scratch
Bandcamp DL

The experience of teaching young children had a significant impact upon composer and trombonist Alex Paxton's own education. Making music with primary school classes, while completing his own studies at London's Royal Academy of Music, brought home to him the sheer delight that direct involvement in the creation of music can generate, even when the instruments are dodgy and the execution haphazard. At that formative stage, children are just starting to conform to the geometry of adult life. Up to that point they show reluctance to move in straight lines, to settle within regular frameworks or view life in abstract terms. Grown-up recognition that rectilinear and uniform motion is the most efficient way to progress from A to B is alien to very young children, who experience a walk as a moment to moment adventure.

The compositions gathered on *Happy Music For Orchestra* offer audiences an opportunity to revisit that early life carnival of sensation, to suspend the imperatives of orderly and goal-orientated progress and luxuriate in immediacy. Envisaging every moment of each piece, in the process of composition, Paxton has acknowledged, he would ask himself "what is the most sonically sensual thing that can happen here, and here, and here". That may sound like a recipe for sustained chaos, but within Paxton's wild imaginings run sinews of his formal training that enable him to forge structures that miraculously hold together, while threatening constantly to burst apart from the sheer exuberance of his tempestuous orchestration.

Entrusted to the capable hands of his Dreammusics Orchestra and Ensemble, Paxton's scores, which allow for sequences of high-spirited improvisation, exude joy in the whole process of musical creation, including the formulation of titles. *Love Kittens* opens with a brisk and bouncy trombone melody, interspersed with gruff purrs. But that firm sense of direction rapidly disperses as the music veers into a complex glimmery sheen of piping flutes and woodwinds, and swirling strings. A sense of melodic development does persist, but in place of readily identifiable and measurable strides the orchestra seem to skip, hop or spin as the mood of the instant demands. In place of that initial sense of a tune unfolding, and anchoring the piece, melodic fragments flitter like incidental patterns forming across the brilliantly tinted surface of a swarming continuum.

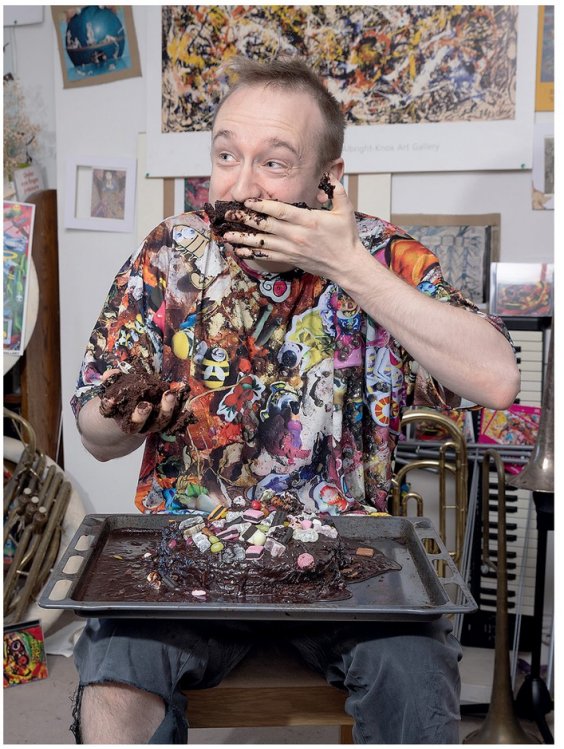
Happiness viewed simply as childlike innocence does not, however, encompass Paxton's artistic vision, which is conceptually sophisticated as well as irrepressible in spirit. Amid the complications of social life and adult relationships, joy is rarely unalloyed. Although the title *Strawberry* might suggest a compact encapsulation of sensual pleasure, it is attached to music that tends to sprawl and misbehave. Happy still, it is nonetheless fraught with tension and dissonant gestures. Patrick Terry's countertenor soars and swoops, threading words through an eccentric assortment of instrumental voices that includes sawtooth and sinewave synthesizers, Wurlitzer organ, drum-kit, violin, cello and saxophones as well as Paxton's growling and grunting trombone. The composer identifies this piece as "a gay love song inspired by the tapestries of Grayson Perry". Like those tapestries *Strawberry* is flamboyant and busy yet artfully composed, packed with telling detail but sufficiently spacious to embrace improvisatory flights of fancy.

Other pieces here draw inspiration from visual compositions by Madge Gill and Ody Saban, idiosyncratic artists whose drawings convey intense emotional realities through disruption of the lines, harmonies and balances of orthodox modes of representation. Internalised truths surface within their distinctive arrangements of decorative details. Paxton's musical designs are comparably disrupted and convey comparable intensity through unconventional means. He also created the cover art for this release, an untidy and attention-grabbing collage of toy figures and confectionary shapes that catches the exhilarating impact of his music beautifully.

Meanwhile in Ohio, galen tipton continues to mine her own seam of hyper-vivid and intensely pleasurable auditory sensation. *Brain Scratch* offers a tasting menu of electro-acoustic concoctions, geared to light up the mind and set the body tingling. It shares with Paxton's soundworld a liking for surprising sonic trajectories, simultaneous multiplicities and unlikely clashes. Likewise, tipton is happy to juggle ingredients that are messy, fragmentary, abrasive or inconsequential. She dangles an attractive melody, then smothers it with electronic scrawl, frustrating the instilled desire for a sense of musical direction, while delivering a series of digitally induced frissons that compensate for our dawning awareness of cumulative disorientation.

Beats you can dance to morph into synaptic flashes; a stream of neurological excitements coalesces momentarily into an environmental soundscape; recognisable undulations of human speech melt into indistinctness, yet continue to flow in translated form, as granular cascades or sinuous sonic patterning. The composer's art of assemblage, her artfully composed and relentlessly playful music of sensation, is an extended invitation to switch off routine filters of preference and predilection, and to plunge into a state of open euphoria. It would be reckless to imagine that you could enter such a state permanently and survive intact, but like Paxton's invitation to happiness, *Brain Scratch* is an affirmation of immediacy, a flashback to childhood's carnival of sensation, much needed in a world steeped in gloom. ○

Happy eater: Alex Paxton



Rui Camilo

evolution of atmospheric glitch music that blurs the lines between what is acoustic, organic, spatial and virtual.

"Zauberwort" is taut, playful and warm, with brass and vocal tones swirling around extended minor sonorities, framed by edgy plucks of harp and guitar. The running piano figure of "Rytmy" emerges and disappears into a blur of sustain pedal, while open fourths and fifths envelope the figure in curvaceous streaks. "Cresta" assembles a ground loop of hyper-defined articulations on strings, skins and chimes around which synth filters gurgle, chirp and bounce.

The loop based musical structures serve mostly to frame Popp's superabundant textures, which are undoubtedly the star of the show. Relief from repetition is achieved through variation and surprise textural drama, like when the airy portamento strings in "Wildwasser" enter, ushering in an amorphous, globular chamber music texture. "Elektrin", with its jangly celeste, wobbly bass flute and fresh glitchy guitar, is a thing of fidgety beauty.

Another highlight is the copious yet poised "Touha" where dulcimers jangle heavy and delicate, extending restlessly in florid bursts and curled flourishes. *Romantiq* is hypnotic, curious and, at its best, genuinely fresh and beautiful.

Leah Kardos

Ozmotic | Fennesz
Senzatempo
Touch DL/LP

This is the third collaborative release from Austrian guitarist/producer Christian Fennesz and Turin based multidisciplinary art duo Ozmotic (Stanislao Lesnoj and SmZ) following 2015's *AirEffect*. From the start, *Senzatempo* (*Timeless*) was conceived as an exploration of the slippery nature of time and our sometimes altered perceptions of it. The chosen theme brought sharp nuance during the temporal strangeness of the pandemic, when the collaborators developed the material remotely in isolation. The resulting album consists of only four tracks, each one immersive, atmospherically resplendent, sprawling yet structurally intricate.

Senzatempo opens with the wide gaseous textures of the title track. Sharp bursts of hissing percussion keep the atmosphere pressurised without suggesting anything resembling a pulse, just a sense of intensifying stillness as Fennesz's shimmering guitar gathers trails of tremulous detritus. "Floating Time" emerges lively and spitting with hiss, clicks and crackle into murky clouds of shuddering distorted guitar, huge and dreamy. The music is refreshingly harmonically driven, not built on inflexible drones but on a tonal firmament that shifts and winds, lending the hulking, unbound textures a sense of structure, direction and movement. "Motionless Image Of Eternity" is a mysterious, ascending, humongous flow. Fizzing and snarling, ever widening, full of awe.

As the title suggests, final track "Movements: I–II" is in two parts, the first amorphous and heavenly, but also sharp edged and taut with ghostly echoes, crackling surface noises, whooshing waves. The sound escalates towards a bursting point, followed by the first and only rhythmic sequence of the record, a dark ambient groove scattered with glitched guitar and shards of field recordings. *Senzatempo* is like meditating on the edge of the abyss. An overwhelming stillness, majestic and dangerous.

Leah Kardos

The Purge Of Tomorrow
The Other Side Of Devastation
Modern Obscure DL/LP

Scotch Rolex & Shackleton
Death By Tickling
Silver Triplet DL/LP

A new pair of releases from UK producer Sam Shackleton, the first of which arrives under the new identity The Purge Of Tomorrow. *The Other Side Of Devastation* comprises two longform soundscapes, designed to "create an immersive encounter where listeners are called on to actively unburden their mind of unnecessary thoughts".

Rather than achieve this meditative effect via the cosmic inertia of similarly ambient pieces, Shackleton creates something more energetic and unpredictable, drawing listeners in with weirdness rather than zoning them out with monotony. "Time Moving" begins with what sounds like the narrator of a TV science programme being swallowed into a black hole, the words squeezed and stretched alongside trippy chimes and a slowly unravelling electronic fuzz. This low key psychedelic effect is bolstered by violinist Kathy Alberici, whose strings warp and stretch across the frame until the vocals return, rising from beyond the event horizon one final time, still garbled and gloopy. "Waves" intensifies the aesthetic, so when the same samples rise from the mix, they are in the form of an almost unrecognisable granular glitch, as though denatured by colossal heat and pressure. While both pieces recall a less bassy version of Shackleton's 2011 release *Fireworks*, the overt doominess of that record is replaced here with lysergic expansiveness.

Death By Tickling is Shackleton's collaboration with Scotch Rolex aka DJ Scotch Egg aka Shigeru Ishihara. The Japanese musician has also worked with Alberici, who contributed violin to Ishihara's 2010 Drum Eyes record *Gira Gira*. These ten pieces appear, at least initially, closer to the archetypal Shackleton sound: "The Blue Sun" buzzes and clicks over low ambient bass, swelling occasionally into twisted knots of solid pulse, while "Asterids (Enter Life)" and "Five Butterflies" take the cosmic drift of his The Purge Of Tomorrow work and charge it with a booming muscularity. However, it's the addition of Ishihara's top layer above Shackleton's exciting low end which takes them elsewhere. "Deliver The Soul" scatters precision machined beats across cavernous reverb, funnelling into the gradually increasing pressure of "Final Spasm", before the album's closer "The Eleventh Voyage" compresses it all into a perfect diamond, all shimmering edges and perfect skittering corners spiralling around sinking bass.

At their best, these pieces combine the mutated drone movements of Shackleton's recent *Departing Like Rivers* with the broken trap punctuations of Ishihara's 2021 release *Tewari*, alchemising some new heavy element in the middle ground.

Spenser Tomson

Fatima Al Qadiri
Gumar
Hyperdub DL/10"

Proc Fiskal
Rt Hon EP
Hyperdub DL

Santa Muerte
Eslabón EP
Hyperdub DL

These three EPs from Hyperdub may not encapsulate the label's scope, but each is imprinted with some of its cardinal points. The one that chimes most with Hyperdub's signature ambience is also the newest addition. Santa Muerte's *Eslabón* conjures those twinkling cityscapes that haunted landmark releases like *Burial* or *Memories Of The Future*. Their city was of course London after the last tube home, the incipient form taking shape at the time being dubstep. Neither applies to Santa Muerte, the recording name of Mexico born, Texas based Panch Briones whose productions owe more to Southern hiphop swing and dembow metre than the proverbial UK hardcore continuum. But the shadows cast are unmistakable.

Edinburgh producer Joe Powers aka Proc Fiskal has eased up slightly on the ambitious thematic of 2021's *Siren Spine Sysex*, which hinted that his limber, grime-inflected braindance could constitute a reimagined national folk music. Not a bad idea, per se, but a big one – ungainly, even, given that one of Powers's strengths is understatedness. The four tracks on *Rt Hon*, skittering and hyperkinetic yet oddly unfussy, demonstrate that they're also low key, diaristic and non-voyeuristically intimate. They speak the digital love language that Powers once expressed a desire to seize from corporate clutches: "Social media notification sounds are designed to release serotonin," he explained, "which is what I'd like my music to do... I'd like to think I'm taking back the power of the manipulation."

Although Fatima Al Qadiri's *Gumar* also employs comparable restraint and economy, it's solemn by contrast, largely beatless, spacious and yearning. Al Qadiri's collaborator is a Kuwaiti vocalist also named Gumar (Arabic for moon) whose heartbroken refrains are repeated throughout. The press blurb suggests that this EP builds on the producer's last album, 2021's *Medieval Femme*, but my thoughts are drawn less to Al Qadiri's output as an auteur than to her portfolio as a film score composer. The tracks are structured less like songs than vignettes, motifs or themes, rich with implied cinematic narrative, stirring a desire to know the story of this enigmatic Gumar and how they came to be offering up these disconsolate vows to the night sky.

James Gormley

Lana Del Rabies
Strega Beata
Gilgongo CD/DL/LP

Strega Beata – Latin for *Blessed Witch* – is the third album from Arizona based musician

Sam An's electronic project Lana Del Rabies. This moody, simmering record is in turns reminiscent of 4AD goth, the ethereal righteousness of Zola Jesus and Lingua Ignota, and even the incongruous melodic sweetness of Nine Inch Nails – channelling its touchpoints and influences into a tightly focused and narratively compelling gothic saga.

An plays a game of concealment and revelation throughout the album, bringing musical elements into focus only to obscure others. On opener "Prayers Of Consequence" she sounds as though she is performing from under a thick sheet of frosted glass. On "Hallowed Is The Earth", a simple piano melody rings out from underneath a pin-sharp drumbeat, before becoming subsumed into a wall of white noise, controlled by An's half-spoken command.

This makes the elements that break surface all the more breathtaking, as with the crunchy electronics and gothic guitars of "Master". The central sequence of this and "Mother" seem related, like twins or reflections, both compelling journeys of a voice through unpredictable soundscapes. "Mother" is the album's central statement, a vocal line rippling through morphing industrial noise, reverbing piano, doomy near silence and repeated wailing. Perhaps because of the titles (there's also "Grace The Teacher") it's interesting to think of these nonlinear tracks as character studies, with An taking on the voices of archetypes.

An follows a grand tradition of industrial goth, but feels most contemporary on "Apocalypse Fatigue" – even the title is blankly reflective of life in 2023. It's an appropriately slow, chugging dirge with every element dragging its heels in automatic forward motion, no beats quite lining up. An's screams and a violent beat are like jumpscares towards the end. Although the album closes on the more reflective, hopeful "Forgive", the lingering emotional residue of *Strega Beata* is a sludgy dread.

Claire Biddles

Saint Abdullah & Jason Nazary
Evicted In The Morning
Disciples DL/LP

Saint Abdullah's *Mechanical Flirtations* was one of my albums of 2019, so I was keen to hear this new dialogue between the Tehran born brothers Mohammad and Mehdi Mehrabani-Yeganeh and the live drums of Jason Nazary (Anteloper/Clebs). It doesn't disappoint.

Former New Kingdom frontman Jason 'Nosaj' Furlow unites with producer Steel Tipped Dove for a stubbornly singular rap album

By Mosi Reeves

Cluck the world: Jason 'Nosaj' Furlow

Nosaj from New Kingdom & Steel Tipped Dove
House Of Disorder
Fused Arrow DL/LP

It's revealing how critics and fans cite Jason 'Nosaj' Furlow's group, New Kingdom, as an influence on triphop acts like Morcheeba, Tricky and Bomb The Bass in their "Bug Powder Dust" era. Formed in New York with producer-rapper Sebastian Laws, New Kingdom emerged three decades ago, a crucial period during which hiphop began to cleave into haves and have-nots, each side judged by its mainstream viability. If the beloved likes of De La Soul occupied a tentative middle ground and moral restraint for the genre's capitalist extremes, then clotted, grungy mashers like "Good Times" and shout-y raps reminiscent of Beastie Boys marked New Kingdom as too far left for all but the most progressive heads.

New Kingdom split after two albums, 1993's *Heavy Load* and 1996's *Paradise Don't Come Cheap*, that are well worth seeking out. Nosaj's appearances since have been scattershot, ranging from peak turntablism-era fare like Material's *Intonarumori* and the *Altered Beats* compilation to Armand Hammer's 2020 album *Shrines* and The Bug's 2022 release *Absent Riddim*. In 2021, he joined with Brooklyn producer V8 TFD for the typically idiosyncratic *Acid Is Groovy Kill The Pigz*. Now comes *House Of Disorder*, a higher profile pairing with producer Joseph 'Steel Tipped Dove' Fusaro.

Six years ago, Nosaj released a two-track cassingle produced by No Surrender, "Last Man Standing" backed with "Modern Man", that poked at his middle-aged frailties. The latter track kicks off *House Of Disorder*. *"And where did this man in my mirror come from?/That's not the face I knew when I was young"*, Nosaj raps in a slight singsong lilt over acoustic guitar. Its shuffling beat, so key to his earlier New Kingdom work, puts the listener in a familiar place, even as it omits that group's youthful, noisy churn. But the languid "Modern Man" turns out to be just a respite. By next track "Beatles", Nosaj is back on his snarky, rah-rah bullshit. *"John! Paul! Ringo! George fuckin' Harrison! N***as only need white boys on heroin! Keith Richards! Holy fuck! How he still alive!"*, he barks animatedly.

Part of Nosaj's charm is his fearlessness. He's unafraid to hide a song's true meaning amid a volley of apparent nonsense, as with "Beatles" and how it subtly questions why a Black iconoclast gets fewer creative opportunities than substance-addicted white rockers. The New Kingdom albums often sounded better than the sum of their parts, with jagged, uneven performances nevertheless adding to a satisfying and memorable whole. A similar result emerges with *House Of Disorder*. The boilerplate "A Whirlwind Among Breezes" peaks with a great summary of Nosaj's romantic frustration: *"When did I become the evil that you despise?"*.

As Nosaj fulminates, Steel Tipped Dove proves a thoughtful interlocutor. This is the producer's second album this year, but unlike *All The Weight Feathers Don't Have*, he doesn't merely stick to hard boom-bap drums. On some cuts, digital melodies and percussive drops pulse softly underneath Nosaj's voice, careful not to get in the way when the rapper (with help from Eulas Pizarro) screams like Pastor Troy on "Lucille". But then there's a howling loop of gothic voices on "I'm The Magic Band And The Captain" and a hurly-burly electric guitar riff on "Rattlesnake". Why not opt for a singular musical strategy? Alas, Nosaj and Steel Tipped Dove are too contrarian to settle for the path one expects. ○

Ruby Alice Furlow

What Nazary adds to Saint Abdullah's sound is solidity and funkiness. But he's not such an orthodox drummer to lay down foursquare beats to simplify the music's impact. Rather, throughout the album's nine compelling tracks he subtly interpenetrates and responds to the duo's sounds in a way that feels properly collaborative.

The title track lets wobbly Robert Wyatt-esque keys ripple over a stop-start stumble of beautifully warm beats. "Stub Of A Cucumber" keeps the early 1970s art rock/fusion feel going in the undertow while the brothers lay down curliques of Yellow Magic Orchestra-like synth. "The Azure Sky" recalls Weather Report in its shimmering sense of wonder, Nazary all ripples of cymbals and snare, Saint Abdullah reversing their drones into time-lapsed spongiform growth before "Insistently, Mystically" plunges so perfectly into the sonic space of mid-70s Sun Ra you're hearing an Arkestra that aren't there.

"Mirror Of Infinity" sees NappyNappa deliver a compelling stream of beat poetry over heartbeat paced clicks and glitches before "Divine Timing Is Intuitive" drills deep into krautrock hypnosis. *Evicted In The Morning* never feels like the product of mutual compromise, working most effectively when the listener abandons any attempt to disentangle the collaborators' respective contributions.

Neil Kulkarni

Colin Andrew Sheffield
Don't Ever Let Me Know
Auf Abwegen/Elevator Bath DL/LP

Texan musician and Elevator Bath label proprietor often renders source sounds unrecognisable, smoothing them into balms that beguile, vine and mutate. Unlike his team-ups with local pal and pro sound mixer James Eck Rippie, Sheffield's solo records tend to be unmapped, unadorned meanders that also happen to be all-transportive vibes. But 2018's *Repair Me Now* (a tribute to the Seattle artist Matt Shoemaker, who died the previous year) found Sheffield's songwriting evolved from shifting moods into active atmospheres – less diaphanous chill out room, more long, strange trip with fangs bared.

If *Don't Ever Let Me Know*, the follow-up to *Repair Me Now*, is cut from a similar cloth, it's more gregarious and engaging in spirit. Subtitled "Charms", the A side ignites with a merry, madcap rhythm moving at the pace of an overheating slot machine or conveyor belt. This jangly Pavlovian theme-construct promotes the illusion that the audience is winning something before Sheffield distends and pitchshifts it every which way, into and away from curdled snare hits and tangled effects undulating suggestively between speaker channels and what sounds like a dozen rotary phones ringing all at once.

The B side, subtitled "Bliss", is more casual and measured. At first it suggests an electric heater moments after having been plugged in, a mild whorl of hums and drones overlapping, intersecting. Several painterly movements later, synthesizer waves are skipping and bobbing, the atmosphere is sliding into deeper densities, the volume is cresting, and there's a growing, unmistakable sense of Sheffield ushering us far beyond our solar system, baton in hand, grandly conducting the stars.

Raymond Cummings

Spirit Of Hamlet
Northwest Of Hamuretto
Broken Sound Tapes DL/LP

Spirit Of Hamlet is a new project featuring producer and musician Benjy Johnson, drummer Scotty Irving, Acid Mothers Temple mastermind/guitarist Makoto Kawabata and Minutemen/Firehose punk bassist extraordinaire Mike Watt, who was also the initiator of the remote collaboration. Having become enthused by Irving's radical noise project Clang Quartet, Watt asked him to record the drum parts for what would become the foundation of *Northwest Of Hamuretto*. Kawabata joined next, contributing bits of his signature Japanese psychedelia and feedback-drenched riffs, while Benjy Johnson produced the record and added vocal lines to the songs.

However disjointed this process might appear, especially compared to the team building energy of live sessions, the group's psych and funk tinged punk rock is surprisingly coherent and energetic. Watt's punk ethos and recognisably meaty basslines lay down a groovy skeleton for each of the eight tracks, while Johnson and Kawabata are given free reign in terms of the direction in which to take them. The opening "Strike It Rich" for example is driven by an irresistible walking bass and a repeating, jagged riff, over which we hear customary but always welcome calls to do nasty things to the wealthy. "Float", "March Of Rain" and "Pillow Song" are generally more chilled. They combine mellow funk – *"Hey, I want to float away"*, sings Johnson – with wailing, shredding guitar escapades.

Elsewhere, "New Eyes For Red King" and "My Cold Cereal Is Getting Soggy" represent the looser, meandering side of the quartet as they entertain a nifty jazz feel and rhythm on the former and Keiji Haino-like sparkling noise rock on the latter. Overall, the album is defined by its breezy energy and a sense of gusto in the playing, resulting in a fun and easy listen.

Antonio Poscic

The Storm Bugs
Best Before 2027
Bandcamp DL

Philip Sanderson and Steven Ball first started making music as Storm Bugs in 1978, creating DIY pop and tape collage, putting out cassettes on their own Scratch Tapes label until 1981. Using old reel-to-reel machines, scratched/locked groove records, fuzzy radio recordings, poetic half-spoken lyrics warped by tape manipulations, their work tapped into a surreal and distinctly British sort of gloom, laced with dry humour. In 2002 they revived the project with *The Bugs Are Back* EP, and in 2017 with *Certified Original & Vintage Fakes*.

Now arrives *Best Before 2027*. Like their earlier work, the album sounds as though it was made with rickety recording gear, only now the aesthetics are early DIY digital – endearingly lumpy DAW production, preset reverbs and hyperactive, babbling vector synths. Opener "Table Matters" (a reference to their 1980 EP of the same name) is a disoriented stomp pinned in place by a monotone rhythmic vocal: *"Dull, bored, numb, grey, frazzled, sitting in a ditch/A hat, and a bottle, and a creeping sense of dread"*. "European Coffee Lounge" continues the sardonic mood, boasting a ridiculously catchy chorus framed by churning, spasmodic synth sequences.

"Syntax" is a highlight, seven plus minutes of chilled synthpop with a softly crooning voice wrapping itself around lines like *"Cadge-gloak, curtal, palliard, patrico, jackman, whip-jack, drummer, click track"*, lending the words a ridiculous erotic charge. Keeping with the wordy theme, there's a loose and lumpy reading of "Leary Man" from *The Vulgar Tongue* (1857) by Ducange Anglicus, which works surprisingly well as an ode to contemporary British masculinity. "Pigeon In My Pocket" is a stranger, speedy muddle of noisy electronics and semi-nightmarish post-punk poetry.

The best gag on the album is "Generic Ambient Music", twinkling digital bells and a Vocodered voice cooing, *"There's years, literally years, of it, that can be streamed online"*. Cheeky, clever and a silly bargain for £1 on Bandcamp. Go get it.

Leah Kardos

Sunburned Hand Of The Man
Hypnotape
VHF CD/DL
Melted
Manhand CD/DL
That Which Is
Manhand CD-R/DL
Headdress (20th Anniversary Remaster)
Three Lobed DL/LP

Originally released by the Massachusetts label Records, 2003's *Headdress* arrived early in an astonishingly prolific period. Remastered for a 20th anniversary edition on Three Lobed, it initially seems counterintuitive to curate a moment like that, distinct from their continuous moment. Part of the appeal was that they weren't of a time, but of time itself, eternal for as long as they felt like it. But while Sunburned Hand Of The Man time is not something to be narrativised, the reissue of *Headdress* is a valuable and, yes, timely demonstration that they have, in fact, changed.

To parse the transformation, you could listen alongside *Hypnotape*, one of their cleanest sounding releases to date, it features crisp and elegant fingerpicking on tracks like "Barefoot On Brush" while also hinting (maybe inadvertently) at a vestigial kinship with fringe US hardcore. Conrad Capistran's split channel vocals on the title track summon a vision of Mike Watt and D Boon duetting "Do You Want New Wave Or Do You Want The Truth" from either side of a stargate. "The Sun > The Moon > The Stars > The Earth" recalls Flipper's most atypical lightheartedness; Deadheaded maybe, but not dead-eyed. Meanwhile "Violate The Silence" is blistering crossover thrash.

Melted and *That Which Is* favour live documentation of real-time activities over studio craft; the former including segments from a radio broadcast incorporating readings of Max Apple and John Ashberry on "Radio Melted", as well as some of their most ecstatic

The fourth solo album by Australian artist Penelope Trappes is a striking work of evolution and deconstruction

By Claire Biddles

Nite worker: Penelope Trappes

Penelope Trappes
Heavenly Spheres
Nite Hive DL/MC

The solo work of Australian vocalist, producer and artist Penelope Trappes is characterised by its sparse patience. Her songs are constructed like webbing, fine and delicate, with space purposefully left for spiritual presences to inhabit. Her first three solo albums, *Penelope One*, *Two* and *Three*, sounded like bare bones interpretations of This Mortal Coil or Julee Cruise, all gothic romance and celestial mystery.

For *Heavenly Spheres* – the first release on her own imprint Nite Hive – Trappes sought out an environment that reflected this inclination towards scarcity and space, resulting in her most stripped down record to date. Recorded while on residency at Britten Pears Arts in Suffolk, the album uses only voice, piano and a reel-to-reel tape deck to reflect the rural solitude that she immersed herself in.

On opening track "The Bitterness Of Parting", Trappes establishes a context of loss and displacement, overlaying distant funereal tape loops with slow, incoherent chanting. She goes on to lean in to the mystery and displacement of unfamiliar surroundings. Field recordings on her previous three Penelope projects reflected her adopted home of Brighton, with sounds of the sea. On "Away From Tidal Waves", a tape hiss mimics these natural sounds, a slowly chiming low piano note standing in for the rhythmic flow of waves. The cliched bird sounds on this recording detract somewhat from its otherwise careful construction and the ominous, mournful sound of Trappes's voice, vibrating like a homesick siren. "A Seagull Learns To Sleep Alone" feels like a reprise of these ideas, a coming to terms with loneliness, as floating sounds are gathered into distinct melodies and phrases.

This loneliness reaches its height in "The Lapse Of Months And Days" – an evocative title reflected in its central piano phrase, an absentminded repetition of a half-remembered melody. Trappes answers it with her voice, as though talking to herself, the piano standing in for company. "Voices That Will Not Be Drowned" has a similar structure, but feels haunted by another presence, or presences. Here, the cyclical piano melody is a familiar arpeggio, like a spell. When Trappes double tracks her spooky vocalisations, she also adds a piano harmony – it's easy to imagine a ghost sitting on the piano stool next to her and joining in. These haunted, suggestive songs are reminiscent of Trappes's fellow Antipodean musicians Jonnine Standish and Laila Sakini, especially the latter's sonic seance *Vivienne*.

Ghostly voices are also caught in Trappes's tape loops. On the title track, she manipulates recordings of vocalisations into phrases, at once clear, then disintegrating. Again there's a feeling of Trappes trying to make sense of another voice with answering harmonies, but the tone is more frantic and lacks harmony, like a breakdown of communication between human and spirit. Again, this idea has a more resolved twin in "Entangled", where muddy recorded voices are allowed the agency to stretch out and find kinship in the piano's melody, before they are absorbed into a buzz of static.

In title alone, *Heavenly Spheres* suggests a shift from Trappes's *Penelope* trilogy. It's a somewhat contradictory evolution – a development of Trappes's sound through further deconstruction – but wholly apt for an artist whose work is both meticulous with fine detail, and trusting of the supernatural forces that elevate it. ○

psych rock on "Goon Roof". Sidereal jazz and funk dominate the latter album's first half. It grows more lugubrious later, shaping itself into something like The Fugs in a fugue, fucked up with gilded splinters under their feet.
James Gormley

Xylouris White
The Forest In Me
Drag City CD/DL/LP

The fifth studio album by Xylouris White continues the duo's alchemical span of time and musical tradition. As much indebted to age old Greek folk music as it is to lo-fi indie rock, the album's magic is conjured from the almost supernatural chemistry between Cretan laouto player George Xylouris and Australian drummer Jim White.

After ten years of playing together, the relationship between Xylouris's laouto and White's percussion is filled with gravitas but still informal at times. White's rhythms are at times spare and suggestive ("Forest In Me") or rabble-rousing (the aptly titled "Latin White"). Xylouris treats his laouto like an actor, sometimes defaulting to its traditional sound but most often trying on the characteristics of other instruments, like the electric guitar. The louche chords of "Red Wine" are almost Pavement-esque, and the song takes a surprising turn towards the end with the late introduction of angular post-punk rhythms.

As with all of the duo's albums to date, Fugazi's Guy Picciotto is on production duties and has a light touch, emphasising the warmth and as-live feel of the recordings. White's sticks clatter, objects and instruments are moved in the vicinity of microphones. Tracks like "Underworld" have the feel of warm-ups, as though Xylouris and White are in the process of finding a groove, fading out as they hook in to something substantial.

In lesser hands, these inclusions could feel trite or indulgent, but here they serve the album's mythos and mystery. As *The Forest In Me* progresses, it's interesting to consider which sounds are made with purpose and which are accidental – what is substance and what is ephemeral. When locked in to Xylouris and White's deeply connected sound, it can feel like great secrets are being offered up to the listener, but heard in passing it's barely anything at all. What magic.
Claire Biddles

Agnes Haus

The Columns

Avant Rock
by Edwin Pouncey

AMP
Echoesfromtheholocene
Ampbase CD/DL/LP
A cold electronic wind blows through London based duo AMP's latest, a chilling end of days concept album that rails against the capitalist destruction of our seemingly doomed planet. Set against Richard A's glacial backdrop of shifting ethereal instrumentation and sound recordings, vocalist Karine C wistfully surveys the ecological wreckage caused by decades of greedy profiteering and reports back. "CanwesavetheWorld" is one such question they attempt to answer as a synthesized storm rages around them – while further along "Drift Plastic Blues" features fathoms-deep guitar playing with looped recitation that laments over the fate of the oceans. Originally aired as a radio session, the nine songs could be read as chapters from a finely crafted sci-fi novel – only now the scenario is based more on fact than fiction.

Body Stuff
Body Stuff 4
The Chain DL
After releasing three EPs, New York experimental punk rocker Curran Reynolds's Body Stuff hurl out their debut LP, where he is joined by instrumentalist Ryan Jones and Xiu Xiu's Jamie Stewart, who provides a robust remix of "New York In The Rain", a song from the *Body Stuff 3* EP. With more room to swing, Reynolds takes full advantage of the opportunity and unleashes a massive surge of passionate energy that occasionally comes across like a hardcore Bruce Springsteen. *Body Stuff 4* is also inflamed with solid moments of intense beauty and unexpected sonic surprises. Halfway through the grinding "Fame" the siren call of pop idol Tiffany emerges, while the guitar chiming "Champion Song" is rhythmically decorated with the clang of tolling bells. Equally impressive is the aforementioned Xiu Xiu remix, a blasting *Terminator* backbeat with Reynolds in the driving seat.

Djunah
Femina Furens
Bandcamp CD/DL/LP/MC
Chicago based heavy rock duo Djunah return with a fistful of dynamite songs that partly deal with being diagnosed and recovering from complex post-traumatic stress disorder. By way of getting their message across, guitarist/vocalist Donna Diane and drummer Jared Karns turn to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Sylvia Plath and John Donne for influence – all of them affected, to some extent, by a similar condition. Another ringing (albeit unmentioned) influence here is fellow rock poet Patti Smith, to the point where it occasionally feels like she has taken control of the microphone. The album's central theme is explored on such unnerving confessionals as "Hallway" and "Suicidal On Christmas" where, over Karns's formidable drumming, Diane scourges her soul, exposing long suppressed inner demons which she exorcises throughout the ten powerful songs that form this emotionally charged and sometimes terrifying workout.

Heavy Blanket
Moon Is
Outer Battery CD/DL/LP
Dinosaur Jr guitarist J Mascis shakes out another set of roaring guitar instrumentals from his other group Heavy Blanket – the heavy rock trio he formed in 2012 with Johnny Pancake on bass and drummer Peter Cougar. To this grouping bass guitarist Dave Sweetapple from Witch has been added, his presence providing another sturdy pole for Mascis and his guitar to lean back on. The elongated riffs crashed out on *Moon Is* are enjoyably meandering, each song taking the listener down a different rocky road as Mascis gently eases off the brakes and lets go. On the album's heaviest song "Say It To You", a monolithic drum and bass boom is pitted with shards of piercing guitar shrapnel, and the semblance of a vocal can be faintly heard beneath the ton of electric rubble that Heavy Blanket have just brought down.

Oozing Wound
We Cater To Cowards
Thrill Jockey CD/DL/LP
Chicago punk/metal supergroup Oozing Wound are stitched together from members of Cacaw, Unmanned Ship, ZATH and Bad Drugs. Deeply scored with pitch-black humour, concrete riffs and the mucus rattling squalling of vocalist Zack Weil, Oozing Wound shift effortlessly from the piledriver bludgeoning that motivates "Hypnic Jerk" to the more sustained instrumental fury of "Crypto Fash", without surrendering any of their creative firepower or ability to surprise. One such thrill invades the end section of "Old Sludge", where a muscular free skronking saxophone materialises and elbows its way to the front. An unpredictable intrusion that pays homage to the jazz roots of Oozing Wound's home city and rocket boosts their unrelenting mayhem into the bargain.

Joanne Robertson
Blue Car
AD 93 DL/LP
Artist and musician Joanne Robertson's fifth album is an open sketchbook of muffled songs that she composed circa 2020. Delicately plucking at her squeakily stringed acoustic guitar, her vocal is virtually indecipherable on a recording that sounds as though it was made on the stairwell of an empty tower block. What *Blue Car* lacks in technical expertise, however, is soon forgiven as the haunted atmosphere of her songs coalesce and gradually take hold, the most effective being "Little Talkin Do You Know" where her guitar and voice become even more muted and vaporous, leaving only the smear of a sound behind her.

Avey Tare
7s
Domino CD/DL/LP
Principal Animal Collective member David Portner returns in Avey Tare guise with another confounding set of strangely sculpted pop songs. Packed with quirky rhythms, bizarre beats and vocal effects, each offering is psychedelically attuned, brimming with hints of post *Sgt Pepper* Beatles, Van Dyke Parks era Beach Boys and just a twist of Todd Rundgren. The resulting heady musical cocktail that Portner serves up will be eagerly drained by his fan base, but the cloying bubble gum aftertaste may leave any newcomers feeling somewhat queasy.

The Telescopes
Of Tomorrow
Tapete CD/DL/LP
Established in 1987, Stephen Lawrie's one man project The Telescopes release their 15th album and it's a doozy. Recorded by Lawrie at his Shropshire studio, the seven songs that shape *Of Tomorrow* could be dismissed as an example of extreme shoegaze, but what squirms beneath the surface is far more intense and involving. Laconically drawled over a slowly moving procession of comatosed beats and drowsy electro disco dirge, Lawrie's vocal is the central instrument as he leads us through a selection of songs that sound eerily familiar but are totally alien. On "Only Lovers Know", the mood is as mysterious and forlorn as a Roy Orbison ballad, while on "(The Other Side)" he sounds like a sedated Alan Vega. Dreamy stuff for sure, but tinged with a lingering sense of nightmare.

Trees Speak
Mind Maze
Soul Jazz CD/DL/LP
More chilled than their previous release, this fifth album for Soul Jazz sees the Tucson, Arizona brotherhood of Trees Speak (fronted by Daniel Martin and Damian Diaz) embark on another cosmic musical journey. With their roots firmly planted in 1970s German rock, Italian soundtrack music and fusion jazz, their electro space gliding sounds somewhat stalled in the past. Ear locked to such past masters as Tangerine Dream, Kraftwerk, Popol Vuh, Vangelis and *More* era Pink Floyd – together with an added motorik gear change for extra elevation – Trees Speak make futuristic flashback music that feels more celebratory than innovatory in its intent.

Critical Beats
by Joe Muggs

Baby Weight
It's Giving EP
HE.SHE.THEY DL
HE.SHE.THEY is smashing out the dancefloor functionality at the moment. The title track of this rude, rowdy but genial pair of pumpers from Washington DC's Baby Weight is straightforward house with a big bottom end, and a slurpy vocodered voiceover dismissing bigots in high schooler insult terms – *"get over it"*, *"what you're doing is tacky"*, *"I try to listen to my haters but I don't speak little bitch"* – then backs up the sass with some nicely discordant riffs. "Slay 4 Me" as you might guess is a ballroom-leaning track with *"walk... vogue..."* enjoinders – but its big sunrise rave chords raise the heartwarming possibility of the track's breakdown *"it's giving progression, it's giving acceptance, it's giving equality, it's giving options, let's see if you can work with this"* washing over big mainstream crowds.

Toya Delazy
SHEESH
Extreme DL
There's not a tempo or rhythm pattern London based South African producer Toya Delazy can't fold into her Afro-rave aesthetic, it seems. "WOZA" has London's drill but with oddly organic sounds, Nigerian MC K4MO's English bouncing off Delazy's Zulu. "SHEESH" and "SE BENZA" are amapiano, the former sped up for a Delazy lecture, the latter dreamy and ritualistic with a distant choir hovering in the background. God knows what "GET EM BRUH" is – it has a tiny bit of Afro-swing to the drums perhaps, but it rolls along at a snail's pace with static electricity buzzing through it and then a syrupy stream of 303 flowing around everything.

Dj.Mc
Relentless
Hyperdub DL
Chicagoan juke/footworking's complexity out of minimalism ethos can still take the breath away. DJ.Mc, though lesser known, has been a stalwart of the dancing and production scene of Chicago's South Side from the emergence of the sound, and his productions are fearsomely controlled. He specialises in abstracted tonal sounds alongside more recognisable jazz keyboard or soul vocal licks, all bound tight to the double-jointed drum programming. Perhaps most instantly startling is "Space Godz", which for most of its three minutes is nothing but a sub bass, a chirp and a whirr, yet manages to be a white knuckle ride.

EVA808
Ödruvisi
GLER DL/2xLP
Over almost a decade, Sweden based Icelander EVA808 has specialised in beats that, though ultra-finessed, are recognisably built on dubstep and grime frameworks and sonorities. Her second album, however, shakes all that out. There are beats, as on the gloopy "Hlaupbangsi (SOPHIE Tribute)" or the sluggishly insinuating krautrock-post-punk-breakbeat threat "Better Than Me". But they're always folded into the textures, and there's also a whole lot of stone, sea and string and brass sections that can't help evoking compatriots Hildur Guðnadóttir and the late Jóhann Jóhannsson. Taken as a whole it's an extraordinary journey, culminating in the overwhelming euphoria of bass roar and tinkling chimes in "Fuglar Fljúga" that will leave you breathless and reeling.

Stefan Goldmann
In Aggregate/Carob
Macro 10"
German-Bulgarian DJ/composer Stefan Goldmann can always be relied on to sound like nobody else, and "In Aggregate" is one of his finest, most individualist moments yet. It's nominally techno, but as its title suggests it's constructed from flurries of sound – fluttering cymbals, bells, whispers, harpsichord and scraped piano string-like sounds, more unidentifiable things. It's like being in a multi-textural blizzard, a kick on the one, two and three beats providing the only solidity, yet somehow in the chaos, riff, groove and melody persist as emergent properties. "Carob" on the flip is way more stripped, but still diffuse, a nagging buzz-bass dragging a cobweb trail of susurrations behind it while velvet ghost bubbles pop all around.

Jerome Hill
Flow Mechanics
Hypercolour DL/2xLP
Your favourite DJ's favourite UK DJ Jerome Hill is an encyclopaedia of underground knowledge, in particular of the interface between B-boy, rave and sound system culture, but also going way further back. And all of that is contained in – incredibly, given he's been DJing for 30 years and releasing music for 20 of them – his debut album. Its Green Velvet-indebted warehouse techno smasher "Stax Had The Funk" tells you where we're going. Everything he does is pleasure principle first, electrifying the synapses, demanding the body jerks and stomps, and there is never anything that sounds knowingly sophisticated. Yet in every pattern, every transition, if you care to listen for them, there are mind-frazzling acts of historical dot joining.

Molly
Thoughts Of A Day EP
RDV Music DL/12"
Parisian DJ/producer Molly makes the kind of deep house whereby you get so into listening to a two-note pattern on a pitch-shifted high hat over a drone, muffled break and kick (on "It Feels Like It Only Goes Backwards") that when a new chord appears it feels intrusive, even though it's as light as air. Molly can also make more eventful music: "Mercure" is the sound of the promise of a city on a starlit night that fades into a dream of flying over it. Berlin based New Yorker Fred P, meanwhile, remixes "Sweet Afternoon" into a spaceflight through nebulae with Moog-y planetoids passing by on either side.

RP Boo
Legacy Vol 2
Planet Mu DL/2xLP
Chicago's RP Boo may be one of the better known sons of the footworking scene, but his music has never not been radically weird. On this compilation of tracks from 2002–07, samples, often of soft rock and rap radio staples, seem slammed together, perhaps like he's bashing the complex rhythms out on MPC pads, while his choice of drum sounds for given patterns seems borderline arbitrary. But it's the definition of method to madness. The sense of barely controlled chaos, occasionally lashing out in random directions, only adds to the wonder that it holds together and maintains momentum.

VIVEK
Shapes EP
VIVEK DL
Where London based dubstep DJ/producer Vivek Sharda has long been wedded to a very pure, introspective vision of dub space and bass, his recent *Colours* EP and now *Shapes* show him wanting to reach out in all directions, and it's a joy to hear. There's still plenty of the vast bass and Basic Channel shimmer and radiance that he's always manipulated masterfully, but around it all kinds of chattering percussion, funk synths, UK garage hip-swing and – on "Her" – a tentatively conversational grand piano exploration, all ebb and flow. The opening title track is something else, though, a pastoral, practically ambient flotation device with saxophone, deep laughter, and something that sounds like a Mellotron.

Dub & Reggae
by Steve Barker

African Star
Days In Creation
Hornin' Sounds DL/LP
Not much is known about African Star. What we do know is that the great Sylvan Morris, ex-Studio One, produced a few singles and an album from which this release is sourced – probably in the early 1980s although the original did not emerge until 1992. The tracks were recorded with a crack line-up of session musicians including Leroy 'Horsemouth' Wallace on drums, 'Ranchie' McLean on bass and The Zap Pow Horns, and mixed at Harry J's. If you dropped the needle on the last track first, "Trample The Dragon", you would think it was Burning Spear, but that's perhaps not so surprising as Morris acted as engineer/mixer for much of Spear's work. Indeed, maybe the vocalist was taken on as "another Spear". Although it's right that music of this quality is available again, I'd baulk at shelling out over 20 quid for just over 20 minutes of music.

Beam Up & Yugo Taguchi
Otaku Dub
Bandcamp DL
Brian May aka Beam Up and DJ Delay is an accomplished live musician and digital dub master. From Manchester, he has also made his home in Melbourne, Berlin, Osaka and

Kobe, striking up dub connects along the way. His previous 7"s for ZamZam Sounds and 45seven need checking. Meanwhile, his new one *Otaku* (Japanese word for nerd) is a collaboration between Beam Up and Yugo Taguchi. Embracing a raw, manga tinged flavour of dub, it runs on gaming riddims inna one drop style. Recorded in Berlin over 2020 and 2021, the vocals have been bubbling in Beam Up studio's slow cooker till now. "Check Yourself" was first released as an instrumental by Germany's Basscomesaveme; the earlier "My Time" rides an 8–7–1 beat recorded by Beam Up and Dubble Dubble while Germany smashed Brazil 7–1 in the 2014 World Cup!

Johnny Clarke
Can't Get Enough
Lantern/Art & Craft LP

Art & Craft was one of those short-lived independent labels that cropped up in the late 1970s to cater for London's Jamaican expats who couldn't get enough roots and lovers music. Issuing material from top artists Sylford Walker, Tony Tuff, The Heptones and Junior Delgado, they managed to snag vocalist Johnny Clarke for his self-arranged 1982 album *Can't Get Enough*, here reissued on vinyl for the first time. All tunes are Clarke originals apart from three covers: Barry White's "Can't Get Enough Of Your Love, Babe", a Gaylads song retitled "Lovely Girl" and Roy Shirley's "Music Field". Riddims were laid at Channel One studio by the emerging Roots Radics band, with production from Mafia Tone aka label owner Stafford Douglas. Not as intense lyrically as some of Clarke's Bunny Lee sides, *Can't Get Enough* is mainly relaxed roots with a smattering of lovers. The art work on this revive recreates the original, so the identity of the brass section remains unknown!

Colonel Elliott & The Lunatics
Interstellar Reggae Drive
Lantern/Rhino LP

Not so much a classic, more of a curio, this is the first-time reissue of a Moog-led electronic reggae Holy Grail album for idiot collectors from 1973. Trojan Records rhythms were turned over to prog/psych keyboardist Ken Elliott to create groovy instrumental space reggae in the style of an *Austin Powers* soundtrack. Yes, the rocksteady brakes are applied to Joe Meek's "Telstar", but with extra plinky plonk melody. The result is not so much Upsetters-lite as Upsetters with surgically removed funk. There's even a cover of The Skatalites' dancefloor smasher "Guns Of Navarone", retitled "Guns Of The Martian Giants" and reduced to cringing tea dance politeness. Then comes a real shock, a genuine rare groove stunner, starting and ending with jungle FX in the shape of album closer "Earth". That track alone is well worth searching out – it sounds like the hired players came to the end of the album and said, "Should we do one for ourselves?" Class act.

Joe Gibbs & The Professionals
The 1970s Dub Albums Collection
Cherry Red 4xCD

Officially the days have long since past when you had to pay a fortune for CDs of the *African Dub* series. Those are included here along with four more sets, *Dub Serial* (1974), *State Of Emergency* (1976), *Majestic Dub* (1979) and *More Majestic Dub* (1979), plus 12 bonus tracks. Although Joe Gibbs and partner Errol Thompson were a virtual dubbing machine through the 70s, their work possessed a musicality and invention based on the quality of the original rhythms and tunes that served as their source. Opening up the run is the early *Dub Serial*, which was regarded as wildly experimental at the time. Music/reggae buffs will recognise lots of cornerstones of dub history that have been shamelessly sampled over time.

Freddie McGregor
Run Come Rally/Chant It Down
Roots Vibrations 12"

Late last year Freddie McGregor suffered a stroke in Jamaica. He is said to be recovering and we wish him well. McGregor is blessed with a wonderful voice, perhaps only matched by Dennis Brown's – like Brown, he started at Studio One where he recorded the 1979 album classic *Bobby Bobylon*, going on to form a productive working relationship with Winston Holness aka The Observer. "Chant It Down" is lifted from 1981's *Lovers Rock Showcase Jamaica* and "Run Come Rally" from an earlier 12" single. These beautifully rich trademark Observer productions showcase Freddie in his prime.

Singers & Players
Leaps & Bounds
Lantern/On-U Sound LP

The Italian label Lantern continues its deal with Cherry Red for the albums licensed in perpetuity from On-U Sound, a move that producer Adrian Sherwood doesn't like to think about. 1983's *Staggering Heights* is often thought of as the Singers & Players collective's go-to album but I would argue this one to be equal, if not superior. Check the exquisite opener "Moses", with its unique – for reggae – a cappella passages broken by finger bells, Prince Far I at his most abstract with the hard driving "Alla La-Dreadlocks Soldier", Mikey Dread's "Autobiography", and Congo Ashanti Roy's "Breaking Down The Pressure", with Sherwood at his wildest dubbing best.

Upsetter
Rhythm Shower
Music On Vinyl/Trojan LP

Released in 1973 with no sleeve, this most welcome, not to mention long overdue reissue continues that tradition, even as it brings a big improvement to the sound quality of a landmark album. In his pre-Black Ark studio days, Upsetter Lee 'Scratch' Perry was bursting with ideas – not so much the rhythm shower as indicated by the title as a torrent. The album includes Dillinger's rambunctious "Tighten Up" on the rhythm of "Cane River Rock", The Upsetters' "Lover Ver", and a version to Shenley Duffus's cover of William Bell's "I Forgot To Be Your Lover", which was later immortalised by Scratch on one of his great Black Ark sets, George Faith's *To Be A Lover* (1977) . "Connection" is a version to the earlier "French Connection" and "Kutchy Skank" is a take on The Gatherers' "Words Of My Mouth", one of Scratch's most successful instrumentals, as version followed version. There's plenty for Scratch to brag about here if he were still around.

Electronics
by Emily Bick

Atom™
Nacht
raster DL/12"

Uwe Schmidt returns as Atom™, this time working in collaboration with an algorithm named x1n, whch has also generated the sleevenote text for accompanying album *Neuer Mensch* and is referred to as "the entity". That may be giving the algorithm too much power here; who gives a co-writer credit to Ableton, or their toaster? In any case, this is tense, taut techno, full of nervous energy. "Geometrische Einheit" is what happens when androids without a body dream of popping and locking on the dancefloor, and "Sprechender Raum (Extended)" sounds like the pixilated villain of Brett Leonard's 1992 Stephen King adaptation *The Lawnmower Man* is trying to claw its way out of the computer monitor, complete with synthesized heavy breathing that's pretty disturbing.

Heinali
Kyiv Eternal
Injazero DL/LP

Last year, Ukraine based Oleh Shpudeiko aka Heinali released an album recorded in a Lviv bomb shelter after he was forced to flee there from Kyiv (see *The Wire* 467). *Kyiv Eternal* is his tribute to the city where he has lived for most of his life, its compositions built around loops and field recordings collected over the past decade. Sounds of cars and buses, transit tannoys, everyday talk, rattling of carts, trickling water from taps and birdsong poke their way out of loops and melodic lines of music box chimes, blowsy, drifting woodwinds, and washes of distortion. The oscillating haloes of fuzz and drone that swirl over loose, cheerful conversations in "Rare Birds" and "Shuliavka In Winter" elevate the quotidian and ephemeral into something much more resilient. Meanwhile, the distorted keys of "Night Walk" sound both haunted and hopeful.

hyphyskazerbox
Manic In Your House
Suite 309 DL/MC

San Francisco Bay Area producer Lili Briar is having too much fun here. This is ridiculous full-on computer music by and for the terminally online and hyped up. "Piss Off I'm Microvibing" is all angsty rave stabs, whoops and beats spun and stuttering like a 486 hard drive death-spiralling in a microwave, sparks shooting everywhere. "Why Don't You Like Me?" is a hybrid of black MIDI chiptune scuzz gleefully dismembering an airy, new age spa vaporwave melody. "Fatal Marching Band Error" could be a Mutato Muzika Orchestra theme at warp speed, but with added breaks and trap beats and squeals and glee.
The rest of this album's 46 minutes pass in

a blur of old school pads, clanks, squelches, hyperventilating raps and screaming, and some proper bangers ("Entity At The Party").

Lara Jones
Fig
Bandcamp DL
London based producer and improvisor Lara Jones is also a saxophonist, and one third of the J Frisco trio. Her solo work often interpolates her saxophone with layers of synthesizers, but these five tracks owe more to the queer, minimalist art-pop electronica that reigned at the turn of the century, before it morphed into the DayGlo provocations of full-bore electroclash. Her production on "Scissors" reminds me of a slicker Chicks On Speed, and their late 1990s take on "Kaltes Klares Wasser", originally by Malaria!. "Look" with its chanted *"I want to look like a girl who looks like a boy wearing a dress"* sounds like Blur's "Girls & Boys" had a do-over by way of Rough Trade's 2002 *Electronic 01* compilation. Elsewhere, "Absence" swells with voluptuous, gloomy orchestration.

µ-Ziq
1977
Balmat CD/DL/MP
The new album by Mike Paradinas is deceptively lulling at first, all humid pads and sinewave surf spray, reaching a peak on the bouncing and balmy "4am". By "Allegro", the sonic palette remains, but the mood takes a sinister turn: imagine the discovery scene in a horror film set at an abandoned beach house. "Marmite" sounds like someone playing a circular saw like a singing bowl in a bad mood, while minor chord synth pads and breathy vocal gasps fill the background. "Burnt Orange" floats around angelic vocals that rise like a seagull hitching a ride to new heights on thermals (these are likely by Meemo Comma, who is credited with a feature on the title track). Taking another tack, "Mesolithic Jungle" adds some breaks and energy into the languid and often creepy proceedings.

Wassermann
Röslein Rot
Kompakt DL/12"
Cologne's Wolfgang Voigt is in playful form here, deconstructing a poem by Goethe, read in a sexy female voice and set to various techno backings. The "Tubass Mix" has the feel of a catwalk show staged on a bouncy castle runway, and the "Sog Mix" is a mashup of bashes at the piano and sharp whistles, with some orchestral smears. The "Heide Mix" could be To Rococo Rot at the kind of office party where there's a queue for people to photocopy their bums, and the "Polka Mix" is oompah bonkers.

Hiphop & R&B
by John Morrison

Backwood Sweetie
Sweetie Skrewed By DJ 3AM
1615982 DL
On *Sweetie Skrewed*, PG County rapper Backwood Sweetie links up with DJ 3AM to craft a mixtape that is infused with the hazy texture of DJ Screw's finest chopped 'n' screwed tapes. Sweetie Skrewed starts by paying homage to Screw, sampling an intro from one of his tapes that says *"If Screw didn't do it, it's not a screw tape"*. This is an interesting way to open an album that borrows so liberally from Screw's aesthetic, reminding listeners that while his techniques and their influence may be widespread, Screw is the owner and proprietor of the screw tape phenomenon. Backwood Sweetie's relentless flow and revolutionary political messages meld beautifully with the slow, chopped-up sound that 3AM applies to these songs. The power of tracks like "Culture/Freedom", "Furious Freestyle" and "Justice For" shine through the dreamy, druggy sonic landscape. Like Screw and a whole host of hiphop DJs before him, 3AM juggles, backspins and repeats Sweetie's lines and phrases in ways that amplify and reinforce their meaning.

Che Noir
Noir Or Never
Big Ghost Ltd DL
One of the best MCs to come out of Buffalo, New York in recent years, Che Noir has been maintaining a streak of high quality releases that have either been produced by herself or with collaborators like Apollo Brown. For *Noir Or Never*, she connects with producer Big Ghost Ltd for nine tracks of dark, orchestral street rap. Flee Lord pops up to trade bars with her on the heavily cinematic cut "Sleep Paralysis". "Caps Lock" is hard as nails, as Che Noir and Planet Asia toss slick lines back and forth across a slow, vibraphone-tinged beat.

ewonee
Aux Tapes Vol 6: The Art Of The Chase
Bandcamp DL
The Art Of The Chase is the latest instalment of NYC producer ewonee's *Aux Tapes* series. It begins with the sound of a record being pulled from its sleeve and placed on a turntable, ewonee prepping us for the journey ahead by audibly documenting the first step in his creative process. From here, the song "Someofit" springs forward, its dusty, swinging drum pattern and low-pass filtered bass evoking the sound and spirit of 1994 East Coast hiphop. Here ewonee displays some masterful beat making skills on tracks like "Itshere", which is built around uplifting horns and a deliciously bouncy interplay between the kick, snare and bassline. The album's 20 tracks are also augmented with the sampled voices of legendary DJ/producers like Pete Rock, Showbiz and Madlib, each one giving insight into the process of sampling and record digging. *The Art Of The Chase* is more than just a good beat tape. The album properly articulates the shared joy of discovering and repurposing sounds that hiphop and sample culture have ingrained in so many of us.

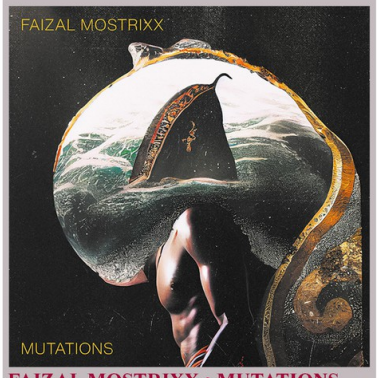
Jehst
Mork Calling Orson
YNR CD/DL/LP
The title of Jehst's latest album *Mork Calling Orson* is a reference to *Mork & Mindy*, the goofy fish out of water comedy about an alien

tak:til

BRÌGHDE CHAIMBEUL • CARRY THEM WITH US
Scottish smallpipes player Brìghde Chaimbeul's 2nd album "Carry Them With Us" is an exhilarating weave of rich textural drones, trance atmospheres and instrumental folk traditions. Acclaimed Canadian sound explorer and saxophonist Colin Stetson is a featured collaborator on the record.

glitterbeat

ALTIN GÜN • AŞK
Their 5th album in as many years Aşk (deeper feeling of love), marks an exuberant return to the 70s Anatolian folk-rock sound that characterised Altın Gün's first two albums. It is a record that radiates the infectious energy found in the Amsterdam-based sextet's celebrated live performances.



FAIZAL MOSTRIXX • MUTATIONS
A genre-defying Afrofuturist manifesto from Uganda. Producer, dancer and choreographer Faizal Mostrixx's singular vision of East African electronic music is a lush sonic tapestry of polyrhythms, modern dancefloor styles, amapiano, Nile basin ceremonial chants and Pan-African field recordings.

Distibuted in the UK by Proper.

named Mork who was sent to Earth to observe humanity. At the end of each episode, Mork (played by the late comedian Robin Williams) would call his home planet to unpack the events of the day and receive guidance from Orson, his superior. With deeply melancholic gems like "Lonely World" and "You", the album touches on themes of isolation and loss over dusty, jazz-tinged beats. The whole thing feels like a series of hazy transmissions from a strange, alien world.

junclassic x giallo Point
snapshots
Classified DL/MC

Created on the eve of the Covid pandemic, *Snapshots* is a collaboration between New York's junclassic and producer giallo Point. The album opens with "1000 Antz", a tune that finds junclassic spitting vengeful bars over an understated beat with a dark B movie-style organ. "96 97" packs its two and a half minute run time with vivid recollections of the past. Comparing and contrasting each year, junclassic details 1996 and 97 as times marked by love, death, gunplay and hiphop. Tunes like "Jealous He" and the EP's closer "Asphixiation" are built on complex lyricism and inventive beats, putting junclassic and giallo's chemistry on full display.

Madison McFerrin
I Hope You Can Forgive Me
Bandcamp CD/DL/LP/MC

On her debut *I Hope You Can Forgive Me*, Brookyn, New York singer-songwriter Madison McFerrin takes on death, near-death, love and loss with all the seriousness and depth these subjects require. The result is a project dripping with atmospheric sound and real emotional weight. The album's opener "Deep Sea" sets the tone, conjuring an air of mystery with McFerrin's soaring wordless vocals, while "Fleeting Melodies" is a soft and patient tune that deals with loss and impermanence. In sharp contrast to the modern sound design and production that marks tunes like "OMW" and "Run", "God Herself" is built around the sound of McFerrin's voice. Her beatboxed rhythms anchor the song, while tasty vocal harmonies are piled up on top. "(Please Don't) Leave Me Now" pushes the tempo and energy up to create a delightfully breezy R&B tune based on a harrowing near-death experience faced by McFerrin and her partner. *I Hope You Can Forgive Me* does what R&B is designed to do, using music to explore the depths and intricacies of the human experience.

Sleep Sinatra x The Architect
Battle Of The Angelz
Bandcamp DL

Battle Of the Angelz is a collaborative project between Lincoln, Nebraska MC Sleep Sinatra, and Oakland, California DJ/producer The Architect. The Architect's beats are anchored with booming drums and bathed in texture. His piano, bass and synth samples are chopped up and warped to create a dense soundbed for Sleep to float on. Lyrically, songs like "Infinite Ammo" and "Eruption" are standouts, striking a holistic balance between street knowledge and knowledge of self.

World Renown
World Renown
Smoke On CD/DL/MC/2xLP

When the duo of Seven Shawn and John Doe (aka World Renown) released the single "How Nice I Am" in 1994, they put a small corner of the rap world on notice. With its gorgeous piano chords and slick Phife Dawg vocal sample, the K-Def production drew us in and Seven Shawn and John Doe's fluid lyricism sealed the deal. For heads who were in the know, World Renown's album was highly anticipated, but the group could never capitalise on that buzz because their label Warner Brothers shelved the record before its release. For decades, rough and unfinished bootlegs of the album have circulated on blogs, torrents and YouTube, but for the first time, a freshly mixed and mastered reissue of the long lost album has been brought to market. Full of dreamy, drum-heavy beats and ignited by Doe and Shawn's chemistry on the mic, *World Renown* finally delivers on the promise of a group whose flame was stifled before it got the chance to truly flourish.

yaya bey
Exodus The North Star
Big Dada DL

Tapping into the sound of R&B and reggae, Brooklyn born singer and songwriter yaya bey's *Exodus The North Star* is as emotionally deep as it is warm. "on the pisces moon" is a lovely and breezy lovers rock tune about the boundless potential of love while "when saturn returns" starts as a soft and intimate love ballad before kicking off into a bouncy, uptempo club beat. More loose and free sounding than many other contemporary R&B records, yaya bey's voice holds it down at the heart of these sweet and fiery love songs.

Jazz & Improv
by Phil Freeman

Anchor & Burden
Kozmonautic Pilgrimage
Moonjune CD/DL

Anchor & Burden are an instrumental quartet led by Markus Reuter, a former member of two different King Crimson offshoots, The Crimson ProjeKCt and Stick Men. He plays the 'touch guitar', tapping the fingerboard rather than plucking the strings, which gives the music a ringing, shimmering quality. But there's a dark edge to it as well, since it pulls from progressive metal and other even more abstract musics. Titles like "Hissing Skin", "The Core Is Organic" and "Corridors Of Silent Screams" make it seem like this is music for Cenobites, and there are times when the inhuman-ness carries hints of Autechre's NTS sessions mixed with the ambient riff thunderstorms of Blind Idiot God guitarist Andy Hawkins's work. Play it loud.

Mike Clark
Mike Clark Plays Herbie Hancock – Again!
Sunnyside CD/DL

Mike Clark was the drummer in The Headhunters, playing on Herbie Hancock's *Thrust, Man-Child,* the *Flood* live set and the *Death Wish* soundtrack, becoming a legend in the process for his intricate diced-up beats on tracks like "Actual Proof" and "Hang Up Your Hang-Ups". But as he says in the sleevenotes to this album, the pianist's acoustic material always bewitched him. He tackles pieces like "Speak Like A Child", "Dolphin Dance", "Sorcerer" and "Toys" with pianist Jon Davis and bassist Leon Lee Dorsey, and proves as adept at swinging post-bop as chopsy funk. That said, this set ends with a version of "Actual Proof" that Davis turns into a swinging, jumping blues number, as Clark and Dorsey dance.

Kevin G Davy
81 Miles Via Hulme
Creative Sources CD/DL/LP

UK trumpeter Kevin G Davy has worked for decades in a variety of contexts, including touring with arty drum 'n' bass duo Lamb. Here, his melodic lines are laid atop rhythm tracks built by producers Songskrif and Rex, and one track, the mournful "Touchstone House", features vocals by MCBUZZB. Samples occasionally add extra instruments, like the saxophone on "Epping Walk" or the dirty electric guitar on "Bullring Blues". Davy also occasionally doubles or duets with himself. His horn lines are presented in various atmospheres, sometimes studio clean and other times seeming to have been recorded in a drafty brick basement. This is a moody album, but one that refuses to reduce itself to background music. Davy's sharp-edged solos insist on themselves throughout.

Letieres Leite & Orkestra Rumpilezz
Moacir De Todos Os Santos
Rocinante LP

Moacir Santos was a legend in Brazilian jazz: his 1965 album *Coisas* is regarded as a high point in big band composition and arrangement, combining Afro-Brazilian rhythms with punchy jazz the equal of Blue Note recordings of the time. On this album, saxophonist and composer Letieres Leite and his Orkestra Rumpilezz – a nearly two dozen member ensemble – rework seven of the tracks from *Coisas*, including "Coisa No 5" aka "Naña", which has been recorded over 100 times. On their version, Caetano Veloso contributes vocals. The instrumentals have a gentle sway, but the intensity at their heart belies Brazilian music's curtains swaying in the breeze reputation. When the Bahia percussion starts clattering, your pulse will quicken.

Eva Novoa
Novoa/Kamaguchi/Cleaver Trio Vol 1
577 CD/DL/LP

Pianist Eva Novoa, bassist Masa Kamaguchi and drummer Gerald Cleaver have been playing together in New York since 2017 – indeed she and Kamaguchi have worked together since 2010. Those years of deep, two- and three-way communication are present and audible in every note of this nearly hour-long set, which flows without a misstep. In some ways, it's comparable to another of Cleaver's groups, the collective trio Farmers By Nature (with Craig Taborn

and William Parker), but there's a quirky sense of humour operating here that sets Novoa in particular apart from her free jazz peers, and Kamaguchi seems to know just when to answer one of her off-kilter clinks or thundering post-Cecil Taylor runs with an equally surprising thump or twang.

Sonny Rollins with Heikki Sarmanto Trio
Live At Finlandia Hall, Helsinki 1972
Svart CD/DL/2xLP
Reading Aidan Levy's *Saxophone Colossus: The Life And Music Of Sonny Rollins*, you soon get astonished at the pace at which Rollins hires and fires band members (particularly drummers). And when he travelled to Europe as a solo artist in the late 1960s and early 70s, he was barnstorming around like Chuck Berry, picking up local bands and letting them feel the touch of the divine for a night. This Finnish band – Heikki Sarmanto on Fender Rhodes, Pekka Sarmanto on bass, Esko Rosnell on drums – keeps pace with the master on "Night And Day" (24 minutes), "My One And Only Love" and "St Thomas" (17 minutes each). Rollins is burning throughout, but so are they. The slightly rough sound quality only adds excitement.

Marco Von Orelli & Sheldon Suter
Draw From The Source
NOW-ezz-thetics CD/DL
Marco von Orelli plays trumpet, cornet, prepared slide trumpet and little bells; Sheldon Suter plays drums, cymbals, prepared zithers, gong and singing bowls. The album contains 14 tracks ranging from 95 seconds to over 13 minutes. If you've been on Earth for more than three weeks, you probably think you can guess where this is going, or not going. Well, you're about half right. Do you hear the sound of saliva being sucked through the horn? You bet! Do you hear gongs and cymbals being bowed like sheet metal being sliced in half? Of course! But do you also get deep, thumping bass drum action? You do! And several moments where it sounds like at least four people are present. Inspired, surprising stuff.

Whatever Happens Don't Be Yourself
Ignorance And Bad Decisions
Lekrofon CD/DL
Whatever Happens Don't Be Yourself are a Norwegian nine-piece led by drummer Nils Are Drønen and featuring trumpeter Audun Waage, saxophonist Aksel Røed, pianist Isach Skeidsvoll, guitarist Mads Berven, bassist Nils Henrik Sagvåg, drummer/percussionist Snorre Bjerck and vocalist Nelly Moar, with Lasse Marhaug contributing electronic noise and designing the album art. The group's third album *Ignorance And Bad Decisions* has a gentle, swaying quality that is influenced by free jazz but has an essential Scandinavian-ness that manifests in a hard to define but easy to perceive sense of inner calm. The nine shortish pieces have the meditative, almost ritualistic quality of Fire! Orchestra or Atomic rather than the raucous blare of American bands. Berven's guitar and Waage's trumpet perfectly complement Moar's wordless wailing on "Fire Blanket".

Adrian Younge & Ali Shaheed Muhammad
Jazz Is Dead 17: Lonnie Liston Smith
Jazz Is Dead CD/DL/LP
Lonnie Liston Smith started out as an acoustic pianist before in the early 1970s becoming a hero of the spiritual jazz and jazz funk worlds for his work with Pharoah Sanders and Miles Davis, as well as his own albums,. He returns to the grand piano on three of the nine tracks here, with Adrian Younge layering multiple instruments – keyboards, guitar, reeds, vibes, percussion – and Ali Shaheed Muhammad playing bass. Greg Paul and Malachi Morehead alternate on drums, and Loren Oden sings on three tracks. Smith's cosmic expansiveness feels somewhat constrained by Younge and Muhammad's assembly line beats, and the album is a compact 34 minutes, but it travels through a range of moods, from almost psychedelic groove meditations to soul ballads.

Modern Composition by Julian Cowley

19+1
Various
19'40" DL
This compilation draws attention to a subscription based series of releases coordinated by Italian musicians Sebastiano De Gennaro, Enrico Gabrielli and Francesco Fusaro. Their in-house chamber ensemble are sufficiently adaptable to serve up fresh takes on scores by disparate composers including Holst, Stockhausen, Bernard Hermann, Cornelius Cardew and Alice Hunter (whose *Dither, Flourish, Dissolve* is a highlight). Tributes are also paid to quirky figures such as Lesiman, urbane concocter of library music; Mort Garson, crafter of warm earth music for plants and people who love them; and pioneering ragtime xylophone player George Hamilton Green. Add a nod to the math-rock duo Zeus!, throw in a whiff of Emerson, Lake & Palmer grappling with Mussorgsky, and you have a sampler which is flamboyantly kaleidoscopic, intriguing and fun.

Paul Baran
Pan Global Riot
Fang Bomb 2xCD/DL
Images of drifting tear gas and a menacing Taser weapon on the cover of *Pan Global Riot* flag up concisely a direction of travel, confirmed on the opening track by the voice of Donald Trump, tailored to add emphasis to his rapacious hunger for power. More subtly subversive, oblique yet incisive, political interventions arise during Glaswegian electroacoustic composer Paul Baran's epic voyage through turbulent times under gathering storm clouds. Stylistically polyglot, he serves up a range of soundscapes and atmospheres calculated to invite thoughtful response and sustain a critical spirit, rather than placate or fulfil expectations. With collaborative input from a broad range of notable instrumentalists, including saxophonist Tony Bevan on *Escobar*, and trumpeter Franz Hautzinger on *Mandelstam (Speak Truth To Power)*, this is a provocative

new from Cold Blue music

Peter Garland
The Basketweave Elegies

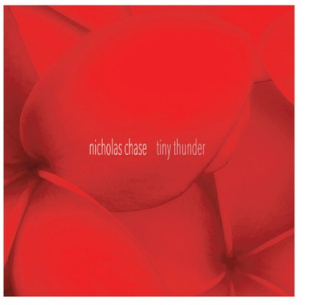
"Garland is . . . a marvelous artist. I admire his work a lot"
—Harold Budd

"Garland's music seems to be about the sheer expressive power of sound itself."—*Fanfare*

Michael Byron
Halcyon Days

"One of those contemporary composers who can justifiably be classed as crucial. . . . Byron's music dances with tremulous iridescence."
—Julian Cowley, *The Wire*

"Byron's music is immediately comprehensible and beautiful, while it remains experimental."
—*San Francisco Bay Guardian*



Nicholas Chase
Tiny Thunder

Chase's music has been described as **"brilliant"** (*The Strad*), **"quietly provocative . . . compelling"** (*Textura*), and **"most imaginative"** (*LA Weekly*).

www.coldbluemusic.com

and stimulatingly varied collection, to live with and ponder.

Chris Brown
Occhio
Artifact CD/DL
The Chromelodia Project's 2020 debut release *Some Center* (New World) was a remarkable demonstration of the musical alchemy that can occur when composer Chris Brown's MIDI-driven virtual piano combines with Kyle Bruckmann's oboe and Theresa Wong's cello. Now, on his *Occhio* CD, the Californian trio work further magic to produce an iridescent song cycle, setting poems from Erika Dagnino's collection *Songs Of The Eye*. These nine pieces are appropriately synaesthetic in their impact, conjuring up bold sequences of unfamiliar forms and surprising blendings of brilliant colour. Each setting uses a different subset of a tuning system derived from microtonal pioneer Harry Partch, spinning exotically harmonised polyrhythmic textures, part notated part improvised, around Dagnino's words, recited by Brown and sung by Wong.

Olivia De Prato
Panorama
New Focus CD/DL
The New Focus label has repeatedly shed valuable light on the relationship between musically ambitious composers and those committed instrumentalists who enable their work to reach audiences. On *Panorama*, Austro-Italian violinist Olivia De Prato provides that vital bridge of communication for five distinctive compositional voices. The diversity of their personal and cultural perspectives, and of their approaches to writing music, calls for an extensive range of techniques and voicings. Jen Shyu's emotionally charged solo emulates the articulated flow of poetry. Samantha Fernando's *Balconies* calls for multitracking to trace a vibrant lattice of crossing and intersecting lines. The violin enters into expressive dialogue with electronics to realise not only Missy Mazzoli's jaw harp-inspired piece, but also Angélica Negrón's dancing and questing *Panorama* and Miya Masaoka's mapping of a personal route to a sense of joy. De Prato meets the challenges set and opportunities offered with resourceful brilliance.

Erik Hall
Simeon Ten Holt: Canto Ostinato
Western Vinyl CD/DL/LP
By the late 1980s, when Dutch record label Donemus started to make recordings of Simeon Ten Holt's music available on CD, patterned minimalism already had its established classics, and no longer sounded like a radical departure. The lilting tonality of *Canto Ostinato*, composed during the mid-70s, seemed to align Ten Holt with that popular genre, although his conceptual engagement with music's history actually transcended contemporary trends. A performance of this piece, issued as a three disc set in 1988, featured four pianists equipped with sufficient subtlety and stamina to make it appear the definitive realisation. Since then *Canto Ostinato* has attracted a significant following, and has been heard in numerous other versions. Now, in the centenary year of its composer's birth, and a decade after his death, Michigan based keyboard player Erik Hall offers this multitracked adaptation, a compelling hour-long enactment of *Canto Ostinato*'s tense flexing and exhilarating release.

Emily Howard
Torus
NMC CD/DL
Torus, *Antisphere* and *sphere* [sic] are orchestral works. *Compass*, a more recent composition, is scored for string septet with solo percussionist. All four are charged with structural tension and packed with dramatic flourishes. The UK born Emily Howard, who studied maths and computer science before training as a composer, makes no secret of her deep fascination with the abstractions of geometric form and intricacies of mathematical processes. Yet her compositions are taut and suspenseful in their development, robustly delineated and often edgy, even rugged in character. Listeners who share her interest in those initiating ideas may find pleasure in tracing encrypted correspondences, as mathematician Marcus du Sautoy does in accompanying notes, but Howard's music may equally be enjoyed for its energetic impact and imaginative breadth.

Powell + London Contemporary Orchestra
26 Lives
Diagonal DL/LP
In January 2022, London's Barbican Centre hosted a 24 hour concert in the course of which Oscar Powell's live electronics were heard interacting closely with a group of instrumentalists from The London Contemporary Orchestra. This stereo mix from a multi-channel recording of their three-hour performance of Powell's *26 Lives* has been edited for issue on a single LP. The composer describes this music's basic concept as "akin to improvised sonic Lego", indicating that different combinations and configurations of electronic lives and their chamber orchestral alter egos might be generated from his score. The music's character is accordingly diverse, with persistent elements suggesting common terms of identity, and significant changes indicating scope for difference. Not a definitive recording then, but a particular set of musical embodiments, each with its own appeal and interest.

Richard Skelton
Selenodesy
Phantom Limb DL/LP
As the allusive title implies, UK composer Richard Skelton has been surveying the moon, from his home in the northern borderlands, not far as the crow flies from Kielder Forest and its astronomical observatory. That object of contemplation and setting play to Skelton's strengths, his established capacity to evoke spatial expanse and to summon up shadows and convey sombre mood. Although track titles such as "Faint Ray Systems", "The Plot Of Lunar Phases" and "Impact Theory" suggest that these selenodetic observations incline to scientific objectivity, his soundscapes are audibly pervaded by introspection and tinged with emotional or psychological colouration. Feelings and states of mind, insecurities and doubts reverberate through these celestial reflections and nocturnal musings.

Biliana Voutchkova & Sarah Davachi
Slow Poem For Stiebler
Another Timbre CD/DL
Less is more? "I say no, no, much less is much more!" German reductionist Ernstalbrecht Stiebler declared during a conversation we had in 2019. Violinist Voutchkova has certainly taken the composer at his word on this release, where *Für Biliana*, a piece he wrote for her in 2015, is reworked as the source for a duo performance with reed organist Sarah Davachi. Their *Slow Poem*, recorded last year in Los Angeles, captures the essence of Stiebler's music, its clear fixation with tones sustained through long stretches of time; the quiet intensity of its unswerving focus upon intervallic and harmonic relationships. Although that may sound rather like a form of sonic navel-gazing, in doing much more with much less Voutchkova and Davachi illuminate beautifully the meaning of Stiebler's suggestion that "space in your mind is important to feel the space which is all around us".

Noise, Industrial & Beyond
by Emily Pothast

Astral Social Club
Occultics
Bandcamp CD/DL
At the heart of *Occultics* is the expansive shimmer of "Sines" – a near perfect 41 minute drone constructed from scintillating oscillations expertly calibrated to facilitate the audio equivalent of a beatific vision. The path to this celestial reset is itself an epic journey. It begins with the infectious collaged beats of "Tininnabulum", builds throughout the spiritualised churn of "Cresting", and climbs ever higher with the esoteric choogle of "Knowl". By the time the listener arrives at the acid gates of "Miragle" – (half mirage, half miracle?), the almost childlike simplicity of its melodic elements feel shot through with profundity, their sweetness having been duly earned.

Clock DVA
Noesis
Rizosfera/Armcomm Europe CD/LP/USB
Originally emerging from Sheffield's electronic scene in the late 1970s, Clock DVA have been brought back from dormancy by Adi Newton – now abetted by Tez Maurizio Martinucci and Gabriel Edvy –with a spate of new releases over the past decade. The sound of *Noesis* is cold and clean but never clinical. Icy beats, pulsing sequences and twinkling synths are tempered by gritty, layered vocals that sometimes merge with the machines through vocoder and other effects. This music is post-industrial in the sense that it gazes back on the industrial

era like Walter Benjamin's wide-eyed angel of history watching a mounting disaster accumulate at its feet. A growing awareness of the limitations of time-bound perspective permeates the lyrics. *"Looking back, we couldn't see the time we lost"*, Newton sings on "The Engines Of Intimidation", *"Although we made some breakthroughs, we had to stop"*.

Dahjyn
Thresher's Blush
Bandcamp DL
The latest EP from Brooklyn based producer Dan Ahrendt as Dahjyn sounds absolutely massive: a kaleidoscope of cut-up samples pushed through punishing digital effects. But the most memorable thing about *Thresher's Blush* is the controlled power of Ahrendt's vocals, which leap from a lithe baritone reminiscent of Scott Walker or early Brendan Perry to a rumbling Cookie Monster growl, then a Mike Patton-esque falsetto with a laser-focused bravado that both mirrors and complements the multifaceted precision of his composition. Ahrendt's vocals lend a strikingly human element to this rhythmically disjointed music that feels simultaneously strong and vulnerable, while his lyrics chart a cosmic struggle. *"Here comes the hand of God to cross you out"*, he sings on the opening track. If you can't beat the howling void, you might as well join it.

JK Flesh
Sewer Bait
Pressure DL
The scatological theme of Justin Broadrick's sixth album as JK Flesh reminds me of the shit-swimming denouement of Matthew Barney's *River Of Fundament*. In Barney's film, fecal fluid is a crossing-over point for the reincarnating soul; on *Sewer Bait*, it's a mucky, murky texture oozing from every pore of this dark, saturated techno. Tracks like "Soaked To The Skin" and "Flushed Away" send the listener on a one way journey sans paddle. Along the way, Broadrick's beats plod and pulse, slink and bump, a dank, crusty dance party in a rising tide of liquid filth. Pretty good shit.

Genesis P-Orridge & The Hafler Trio
Dream Less Suite
Soleilmoon 2xLP
This sprawling double LP consists of recordings made over several years by The Hafler Trio's Andrew McKenzie and the late Genesis P-Orridge, as 'resurrected' and completed by McKenzie. On the A side, whiffs of rhythm and half-heard whispers ferment in a heady brew of squalling guitars. A crimped veil of atmosphere parts like curtains of time; snatches of long forgotten broadcasts slip in and out of the ether as a ghost radio casts about in search of a signal. The B side opens with a cackle before moving on to shrieks, screams and apocalyptic percussion achieved with the help of Eric Random and z'ev. The last two sides offer an ecstatic, mind-erasing minimalism, first in the form of rhythmic collage, then in the scintillating glow of an endlessly encroaching swarm.

Salac
Buried
Bandcamp DL
Recorded during the pandemic lockdown, the "third and final" album from Avon Terror Corps co-conspirators Clíona Ní Laoi and Max Kelan Pearce as Salac is a brackish mélange of sandblasted textures and slinking beats. On "The Dirt", these elements take centre stage, creating an off-kilter grid. Elsewhere, they become a foundation for spoken word poetry, diaphanous singing, searing screams and sibilant whispers run through a snaking delay. As the album title suggests, the poetry is largely buried in layers of distortion. The snatches of meaning that float to the surface reveal themes of death, purification and the masochistic delight of receiving *"the lashing I deserve and enjoy so much"*.

Size Matters
by Byron Coley

Kevin Barker/Matthew J Rolin
Barker/Rolin
Eiderdown MC
Excellent split tape by two most superb guitarists. Brooklyn based Barker, who has often recorded under the Currituck County moniker, and Ohio's Mr Rolin are both in peak quarantine mode here. Recorded to his phone at home, Barker's six tracks are in his signature style – carefully assembled rural instrumentals with rich melodic content, seared with humble mastery. Rolin offers a couple of more extended improvs recorded on his back porch. They both have an open epic quality that would make a perfect soundtrack the next time you decide to watch John Ford's *The Searchers* in slow motion with the sound off. Try it, you'll like it.

The Biscuits
She's Strong
No Label 7"
Wonderful first (I think) single for this power-lifting New Zealand trio. Brutarian splash drumming, fuzz-blown guitar riffs and fairly damn anthemic female vocals give this record (especially the A side) easy access to alternative universe chart fame. Very boss stuff on a new label that appears to have taken the place of the late, lamented Independent Woman imprint.

The Bran (Another Plight Of Medics...) Pos
Tape #2
Chitah! Chitah! Soundcrack MC
Like Cleveland's old X-X, The Bran (...) Pos, has a name that can be changed to suit the seasons. The parentheses can be filled with whatever words seem best at the time. So it is and so it has always been with Jake Rodriguez's long-running San Francisco based experiment. On this tape, collage is king. Voices and sounds are looped, chopped, channelled and reverbed in a variety of odd ways. Instruments (or fake instruments) provide breaks in the babble, as do various effects and squeals. But even though Rodriguez takes a kitchen sink approach to assemblage, he still manages to keep things remarkably musical (if not entirely human).

POOLE
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Dylan Burchett & Hal Lambert
Always A Pleasure
Tentative Power MC
Both musicians are based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Lambert is a guitarist and Burchett is an electronics guy. On this tape Lambert does a lot of long tone stringing, which Burchett processes in real time on his computer, while adding additional textures with his synth. The results are slowly shifting low key feedback explorations in the Fripp & Eno/Heldon tradition. Perfectly paced to be the music at my next French prog prayer breakfast. Bring your own crêpes.

ChopChop
Elástico
Rose Hill 7"
The second release by this Brighton quintet is a lathe-cut four song EP. The music has an old school club-friendly feel, which makes the press sheet's comparison to the ZE Records stable quite cogent. With vocals by Spanish novelist Xelis de Toro, and a very specific sort of post-disco/post-punk instrumentation, the sound of ChopChop is very much like something you might have stumbled across at Giorgio Gomelsky's Squat Theater on a weeknight during July 1979.

Darrell DeVore
A Song Of Civilization Up To Now
Goaty Tapes MC
In a sort of conceptual follow-up to the excellent Charlie Nothing project they did a couple of years ago, Goaty Tapes has now decided to document another arcane California musician/artist. DeVore was the keyboard player for legendary San Francisco band The Charlatans in the 1960s. After that he was a member of the very obscure free jazz ensemble Pygmy Unit (whose cool sole LP was recently reissued by Holidays). After that he got into making and playing acoustic instruments. Recorded between 1975–2002, this tape documents DeVore's later work. The sounds include weird but new age-y flute and percussion sounds (with occasional Harry Partch overtones), as well as spoken bits about how music functions, and also a couple of overt jazz tracks. There's even a little booklet to keep your eyeballs as up to date as your ears. It's funny to think this guy wrote the proto-punk classic "Styrofoam" (recorded by both Mike Wilhelm's Loose Gravel and Sean Tyla's Tyla Gang), but that just goes to show what a wild, woolly world we live in.

Dippers
Looking For A Sphere
Tenth Court MC
First release by this new Australian duo, who have emerged from Brisbane's Thigh Master. Remaining members are Matthew Ford and Innez Tulloch. Between them they handle a full band's worth of instrumentation while creating a fine little suite of oddball pop songs. The Dippers' sound is much more spare than Thigh Master's, evoking a miniaturisation of certain Elephant Six elements. They combine those structures with a quietly surreal approach to songcraft, as well as a tendency to go free form with melodic intent. Nice one.

Hari Hardman
There Is A Graveyard In My Mouth
Hardman MC
Every year or so we get another short tape from this electronic musician, now based in Reading, UK. Each release tends to explore a single compositional motif from a few angles for a brief period. This time the sounds are in the vein of old school machine noise of a pre-power electronics nature. Coarse but not harsh, they evoke European industrial practices of the pre-beat 1980s – ratcheting through the air like thick chains of iron searching for an angry fix.

Heavy Mother
Comical Uncertainty
Feel It MC
Hot on the heels of their great debut LP, here's a six song encore by Eddie Flowers's raunchy Indiana based quartet. Guitarist Craig Bell (Mirrors, Rocket From The Tombs, etc) adds a little guest aktion on a cover of The Velvets' "Foggy Notion", but the rest is done unassisted, and it sounds boss. Besides "Foggy Notion" they also cover Fred Neil's "The Other Side of This Life". The four originals balance between raw scraggly garage pus drenched in pre-punk energy, and distended psychouts loaded with the jittery energy of bad acid. Having followed Flowers's musical career for almost 50 years now, he's never steered me wrong.

Little Annie meets Night Foundation
Inertia
Noir Age 7"
Night Foundation is one of the current electronic projects envisioned by Florida's Richard Vergez. In this instance, his work is smooth and bassoid enough to have a vague dancefloor-friendly feel without being overtly prancy. This notion is enhanced by the presence of a dub B side, so things are not as dark as with most of Verge's projects. But they're still not sunny. Of course, Little Annie's lyrics and casual vocals have more in common with urban menace than sunshine pop, so the pairing works quite well.

Masami Makino
Youlu Mystique
Fort Evil Fruit MC
Tokyo based musician Masami Makino is best known for his work as a DJ and producer. He also helmed techno outfit Inner City Jam Orchestra. *Youlu Mystique* shows a very different aspect of his talents, recorded as a solo work highlighting mostly acoustic guitar and sometimes voice. There are other light production touches, but most of the music walks a line connecting classical, folk and dream pop into a beautiful triangle. There are no beats evident and the sounds follows a slippery course – the guitar creates atmospheric curtains ranging from new ageist to almost aggressive, the intent seeming to be less about creating melody than mood.

Shitstorm
Demonic Alien
Do What? 7"
Very good new single from this St Louis, Missouri quartet, who've mostly done cassettes previously. The five tracks have fantastic mid-range garage propulsion, with enough nascent snot in the guitar and vocals to give everything a timeless quality. And really, since Roky died the whole demonic alien concept has really lacked any real strong proponents. Perhaps Shitstorm are ready to tote that barge!

Passed Futurist
Lost Naturist
Akti MC
A guitar/drum duo, with roots in the art wing of the Finnish punk underground, Passed Futurist owe equal debts to metal, psych rock and free jazz. The dynamics range from frenzied splashing to static stretches where a drum beats slowly while amped guitar waves spread out around you. It's very much in the tradition of Doug Snyder and Bob Thompson's 1973 LP *Daily Dance*, and is sure to please the many people who have been wondering what Nels and Alex Cline's garage duo tapes might sound like.

Reynols
Corulu Flatdas Gasigo
Artsy 2x7"
Originally planned for release 20 years ago, this session by Argentina's most beloved outfit is a solid if deconstructed chunk of avant rock squall. Pulse driven, with a scratchy metallic edge to its chaotic propulsion, the first record has instrumental versions of the two tracks. The second features Miguel Tomasín's vocals only versions, which sound as wily as ever. There's a download code available if you want to hear the complete (that is, instrumental + vocal) mixed tunes, but I am plenty happy with just the component parts. Your call.

Turner Williams Jr
Carved Air
Working Man Lay Down MC
Lately based in Marseille, Williams is an Alabama born guitarist who has expanded his kit to include all sorts of exotic stringed instruments. His first axe hero was the late Davey Williams, although his palette was expanded (and mind was blown) when he heard Mick Flower play the shamisen. Turner's playing here tends to be loud and streams around your head without surcease. Still, there's a delicate poetry in the way the shards of sound are handled, balancing the surface and infrastructure with teetering precision.

What + Robert Millis
Live At The Good Shepherd Chapel
Sound Holes MC
Post-form trio improvisation from the US Pacific Northwest. What are a duo with drummer Dave Abramson (Master Musicians Of Bukkake, Spider Trio) and sound artist Alan Jones on pedal steel and electronics. They are joined here by multi-instrumentalist Robert Millis (Climax Golden Twins) on guitar and electronics. The music is luxuriously paced and full of mystery. A wide variety of tones is created and sustained in a whole lot of different ways, while percussion boils in the background.

Send cassettes, 7"s, 10"s, etc for possible inclusion in Size Matters to: Byron Coley, PO Box 627, Northampton, MA 01062, US

The Boomerang

New reissues and archive releases

Black Eyes
S/T Demos
Bandcamp DL
Cough Demos
Bandcamp DL
Live In San Francisco 5-23-2003
Bandcamp DL
Live In Amsterdam 11-05-2003
Bandcamp DL

Dischord Records was some way beyond its imperial phase when Black Eyes joined its roster in 2003, but the group's self-titled debut proved that the Washington DC punk scene still had a few surprises up its sleeve. While working discernibly in the lineage of DC hardcore, Black Eyes added an expanded line-up – two drummers, two singers, saxophone – and a similarly expanded sensibility. Like The Pop Group a couple of decades before, they treated punk rock like a vessel to be filled with dub, jazz and funk, then shaken to a point of combustible intensity. Black Eyes burned bright, then burned out in 2004, just a couple of months before the release of their second album *Cough*.

Fast forward 20 years and Black Eyes have reformed for a string of shows down the East Coast of America. Instead of a straight reissue campaign, the reunion has prompted them to dig through the archives, yielding four releases – two demos collections and a pair of live sets – which, though rather rough in places, capture something of the band's manic, declamatory intensity. Best of the four is *Cough Demos*, a set of neatly captured practice room recordings recorded in advance of that second album. Double drums lock into rolling grooves, guitars gnash and thrash, vocalist Daniel Martin-McCormick gibbers away with the shrill intonation of a fire alarm, Saxophonist Jacob Long laces the chaos with snakish peals of horn. "False Positive" and "Spring Into Winter" give the sense that the group got not just the blaring sonics of free jazz, but something of its liberatory spirit too.

Of the live sets, the San Francisco performance sounds like a great, high energy show, but a muddy recording renders its thrills rather residual. Better is a crisply recorded set captured in Amsterdam. Highlights include a ferocious take on their best track "Deformative" – sadly truncated by some sort of digital glitch just before its close – along with "Cough Cough" and "Commencement", the latter of which finds the group reaching for echo and effects to explore their simmering, dub-inflected side, a sound that Martin-McCormick and Long went on to mine further in their post-Black Eyes band, the sorely underrated Mi Ami.

All four albums are available from Black Eyes' Bandcamp and downloads come free with *Speaking In Tongues: Black Eyes 2001–2004*, a zine packed with interviews, archival photos and an oral history.

Louis Pattison

Adam Bohman
Music And Words 3
Paradigm Discs CD/DL

Released in 1999, the first volume of Adam Bohman's *Music And Words* was a kind of post-Residents surrealist churn-up which rumbled in the intersection between the artist's idiosyncratic sense of humour and his eye/ear for the grotesque. A second volume was released in 2014 and it's followed now by a further instalment; all three collections document work created during the 1980s, but this third volume presents Bohman's tape creations at their most mangled and wild.

Music And Words 3 opens with "At Grandparents/Hearing Aid" and "Unpleasant Discharge Blues No 1", a scuttling slab of music concrète populated by detuned radio and half-tuned guitar, segueing into a trumpet riff which trembles as though it's on the edge of punching an obnoxious stranger. Bohman's trumpet props up many of the other pieces, the effect of which is to undercut the causticity of his experimentalism and further the warmth of his unique narrative voice, which comes across like a kind of audio version of film maker John Smith. On "Brighton Pt 1" Bohman describes the inside of a chip shop with the same heavy interest as he does the outside of a sex shop – like Smith he always pulls something incredible from the mundane.

These "talking tapes" – pieces constructed from cassette recorded monologues and aural detritus – recall the mangled theatricality of The Bohman Brothers, his duo with sibling Jonathan. However, they are interspersed by more garbled and wordless creations closer to the rough experimentalism of his work with The London Improvisers Orchestra, such as the glottal and louche "Bitumen Sex" which registers somewhere between vocal warm up and coital grunting.

The record closes with "Foster's Champions" which provides a perfect balance between the comical and the grotesque; various descriptions of lewd acts conducted by a variety of sports people (*"You can have Alex Higgins, snookering your rim"*) are laid across muzak trumpet, sounding like a cabbie talking bollocks while his radio plays an advert for a gentleman's outfitters.

Spenser Tomson

Adam Bohman

Joanna Brouk
Sounds Of The Sea
Numero Group DL/LP

Joanna Brouk was an intriguing figure, a St Louis County, Missouri born composer who came to music from the world of creative writing and poetry, and began creating music while studying under Terry Riley. As a radio producer, she composed music for nature documentaries and self-released a number of her own compositions on cassette via her own Hummingbird Productions label before quite deliberately ending all her compositional work in 1985. This music gained Brouk recognition in new age circles but it has been often overlooked until now.

Sounds Of The Sea is one of Brouk's tapes from 1981, reissued here by Numero Group, who also collated archival recordings for 2016's *Hearing Music*. It's a hugely evocative album, especially for those of us far from any sea. The album opens with "Invocation" – a conch shell

played into an infinite vista of sky and horizon – before subsequent tracks like "Atavesta" subtly fill out the beach-wide picture with Brouk's suggestive flute playing, seemingly hugely influenced by Indian classical flautists like Pannalal Ghosh.

As this immersive, Turner-esque picture of the sea as natural church unfolds, we hear drones swimming up from the depths, whalesong and vocal extemporisations conjuring images of marine life, swirling echoey bird calls pulling us back to the surface. There's a deeply charged eroticism inherent in this record – a sense of tingling bliss that takes over the body of the listener – skin salty with spray, soul pulled into the waves. This plays resonantly with the mythical elements of sirens and shipwrecks Brouk brings in on the devastating "The Nymph Rising/Calling The Sailor".

By the album's end, Brouk's voice is dominant, raw and wondrous, but also slow-dubbed into gorgeous dissonances and Eastern harmonics. Sceptics are urged to forget the new age aspect of this music and surrender to it without prejudice. It's a hypnotic and profound gateway to a shore you won't want to leave.

Neil Kulkarni

Tony Conrad/Arnold Dreyblatt/Jim O'Rourke
Tonic 19-01-2001
Black Truffle DL/LP

A mountain looks impressive from a distance, huge, adamantine and immovable. A mountain up close reveals a mind-boggling level of metamorphic detail, with swathes of history represented in every handspan. So it is with the music of this extraordinary one-off trio.

It's not so much a collaborative group as the entrance of bassist Arnold Dreyblatt and allsorts specialist Jim O'Rourke into the soundworld of Tony Conrad. It is the precision of the music that should most forcefully impress, not its power and bulk. When the sound thins out in the later stages and the individual components become evident, violin, bass, monochord and hurdy-gurdy effects fusing together and sedimenting into two slabs – how often we reach for that geological term when listening to music like this – it becomes clear again how impactful and influential Conrad's harnessing of just intonation has been in contemporary music.

The event at New York's Tonic in January 2001 had involved Conrad, Dreyblatt and O'Rourke each presenting individual recitals before coming together to create something truly astonishing. The discovery of the tape isn't just a nicely marketable find, an obvious and appropriate item for Black Truffle's 100th release. It's a genuinely epochal moment in the slow, but constantly backsliding acknowledgement of Conrad's role in American composition. This is a truffle of grand size and pungent flavour.

The grinding together of three voices never for a moment seems haphazard. Only the most casual listen could suggest that this

David Toop and Paul Burwell's Quartz/Mirliton label is extensively chronicled in a new box set

By Peter Margasak

Paul Burwell (left) and David Toop at Ealing College, London, circa 1972

Quartz/Mirliton Cassettes: 1971–1979 Vols 1 & 2
Various
Vinyl-On-Demand 16xLP+2xHbk+CD

In his foreword to the massive 2016 Ecstatic Peace Library book that collected the complete run of the British improvised music zine *Musics*, David Toop reflected upon how much of the activity struggled to take root before that publication's emergence in 1975. "Whatever early enthusiasm surfaced in the early days had mostly sunk back under the surface," he wrote. "You could spot the odd bubble in the music press of the day but the victim was missing, assumed drowned."

There was plenty of activity that matched that description, but he might well have been speaking specifically of his own passionate endeavours with long-time musical partner Paul Burwell. Together the pair operated a cassette label so modest and grass roots that only the most rabid collectors even know of its existence. Not for nothing does Toop refer to Quartz/Mirliton as a "ghost of a label" in the introductory essay he writes for this colossus of a box set.

I'd never heard of the cassette label myself until I spied a notice for this elaborate release, which culls together all of the extant recordings that could be located, along with some previously unissued material, pressed onto 16 high quality vinyl slabs spread across two separate box sets, each with its own unique 204 page hardbound book. It's a work of obsessive scholarship and preservation, chronicling one strand of a seriously fertile yet marginalised musical era, with a 400 euro price tag to match its physical opulence. There's an almost absurd tension between the scale of this production and the total obscurity of the source material – not discounting the historical import of most of the figures involved in the recordings, including Evan Parker, Hugh Davies, Bob Cobbing, Max Eastley and Steve Beresford. When Frank Maier, who operates the German label Vinyl-On-Demand, contacted Toop about collaborating on the project, the latter was incredulous, certain that the proposal would be an exercise in futility. Of the dozen official Quartz/Mirliton cassette releases, Toop owned only a single copy of one title, and it had been given to him many years after the operation ceased to exist. As he explains in his introduction, Maier persisted, and we should be thankful he did.

Toop and Burwell met as 20 year olds in 1969, and both were immersed in London's vibrant free improvisation scene. They formed a duo called Rain In The Face, which initially brought some rock energy to its work, before drifting further into nonidiomatic abstraction and experimentation, and eventually dropping the band name in favour of their surnames Toop & Burwell (Toop relates a story of the duo playing a 1973 BBC Radio 3 session for Simon Draper of the newly formed Virgin Records, who, after expressing his lack of interest, played him the forthcoming Mike Oldfield album *Tubular Bells*, leaving Toop convinced that he would remain in the underground).

The final two records in the box are comprised of the duo's rehearsal tapes – the earliest recordings featured here, dating back to 1971, six years prior to the advent of the label. The utterly haunting track "Do The Bathosphere" is a song-like meditation in which Toop's fragile falsetto conjuries a song-dance over Burwell's ritualistic bamboo trumpet drones. Before launching the label, both figures had operated homemade publishing concerns: Toop started Quartz, reflecting an interest in pre-new age mysticism, while Burwell operated Mirliton, named for musical objects featuring a membrane triggered by the human voice, like a kazoo, or as a resonating part of another instrument, each creating buzzing sounds. Both figures were fervent instrument builders, and many of those early publications contained their research into such work. The books are packed with images and typewritten texts chronicling those experiments.

music was in any way governed by chance. It is, in contrast to most of the equally casual honorifics of modernism (which values chance above all), utterly deterministic, its progress slow and seemingly undramatic, but inexorable in development and monumental in impact. Played loud or quiet – it doesn't matter – its striations are all governed by strict laws and a sense of purpose that makes a great deal of classical composition sound slapdash. Conrad's death in 2016 seemed premature, even though he was 76. There was still too much of the story to tell.

Brian Morton

Roxy Gordon
Crazy Horse Never Died
Paradise Of Bachelors CD/DL/LP

From the consistently excellent Paradise Of Bachelors label (Terry Allen, Lavender Country) comes another alternative vision of country music from the American South, this time from Choctaw, Assiniboine and Texan poet, musician and activist Roxy Gordon. The first of a planned series of archival releases, *Crazy Horse Never Died* is a reissue of Gordon's 1988 debut album, and it's a raw, strange meeting of country guitars, synths and Gordon's recited poetry.

Among Gordon's fans were Townes Van Zandt and Leonard Cohen, whose 1980s work shares a kinship with the most notable moments of *Crazy Horse Never Died*: a fusion of country signifiers with rudimentary electronics. "Living Life As A Living Target" sees Gordon compare the life of a prairie dog to that of Native Americans (*"Living life waiting for the hawk, living life waiting for the white man"*) in his distinctive Texan drawl, measured against the energy of the synths – gravitas meeting desperation.

"Flying Into Ann Arbor (Holding)" and "The Hanging Of Black Jack Ketchum" are also Cohenesque, reminiscent of the stark, rolling guitar and half-spoken recitations of his late 60s work. The latter is a folk ballad elevating an overlooked tragedy to a western legend, done to even more astounding effect on "I Used To Know An Assiniboine Girl", the story of a Native woman imprisoned for defending herself against domestic violence (*"She'd come to my door in the darker hours of night/Asking drunk for help while she cried"*).

Gordon's words are uncompromising and his delivery only emphasises this. *"Your green dollars have worked the working class to death for generations/And stolen from them the possibility of life lived"*, he spits in "An Open Letter To Illegal Aliens", an anti-capitalist, anti-religion preacher backed by a cheap church organ (*"Send back your Christianity/ Christianity kills"*).

Much like the reissue of Lavender Country's 1973 debut, *Crazy Horse Never Died* elevates the voice of the marginalised in country music, and matches its historical significance with music that is vicious and unusual in its own right.

Claire Biddles

By the mid-1970s Rain In The Face had stopped performing, but Toop and Burwell had become increasingly important figures in the UK improvised music scene. In 1974 Quartz/Mirliton published *New/Rediscovered Musical Instruments*, a book that not only drew on the pair's research, but also work from Davies, Parker, Eastley, and Paul Lytton. The publication led to a public TV programme on the material called *Sounds Amazing*, as well as a 1975 exhibition at the Scottish National Museum of Modern Art, with additional contributions from Annea (then Anna) Lockwood, Joanna Godliman and David Sawyer.

That same year Toop made a split album with Eastley titled *New And Rediscovered Musical Instruments* for Brian Eno's then new Obscure Records imprint. The activity led them to launch the cassette label in 1977, when the bulk of the catalogue's 12 releases were put out into the world in tiny batches, scattered at cultural centres, record shops and booksellers around the country. The cassette liner cards were mimeographed, but the actual tapes were duplicated one at a time. In a ridiculous detail Toop explains that Burwell had access to a Revox tape machine while studying at London's Royal College of Art, so they would transfer recordings originally made on cassette to reel-to-reel, which serve as a master. Of course, that convoluted process added work and extra tape hiss to each release, but it's indicative of the homemade aesthetic. This wasn't business, it was cultural documentation. By 1979 the final tapes had been issued, and the musicians continued forward through various paths, Toop most famously becoming one of the UK's most astute and expansive music critics.

As far as I can tell only one of the Quartz/Mirliton releases was heard beyond its initial release. A 1977 release by Three Pullovers – Beresford, Nigel Coombes and Roger Smith – made in 1975 was eventually reissued on CD by Emanem Records in 2000, although that release is now out of print. To be perfectly honest, nothing in the set stands as some missing link or lost classic of British free improv history. Of course, Toop and Burwell never entertained such ambitions. Instead, they took upon the often thankless task of documentation. At the same time, nearly everything contained in this gargantuan set is quite good, even though some of the recordings are undeniably rough. In some cases, like the one featuring Toop, Burwell and poet Bob Cobbing performing at the Eighth International Sound Poetry Festival in London in 1975, two separate tapes are crudely spliced together. Toop has noted that some of the source material used in the set came from tapes of the same music on tapes running at different speeds. A duo recording of Burwell and alto saxophonist Herman Hauge clearly from 1976 is superb, but the one of the channels contains as much distortion as it does music, testing the listener's patience despite the quality of the playing. But these are minor quibbles.

Toop and Burwell reflected a specific corner of the British free improv scene, one far more rooted in sound art and experimentation than in jazz, although most of the participants were clearly informed by and respected that tradition. On a recording of Evan Parker, Hugh Davies, Burwell and Toop, those lines are all thrillingly blurred, with the collision of acoustic and electronic sounds capturing another stop in a line extending from The Music Improvisation Company. The interest in homemade instruments and bioacoustics – taking inspiration from and sometimes using recordings of sounds of insects and animals and other naturally occurring sonic phenomena – shapes much of the work featured here, although not exclusively. Listening across the set reinforces a persistent commitment to exploration and research, endlessly pushing forward and engaging in thoughtful collisions.

While the 16 records – as well as a single bonus CD of music from a duo release by Toop and percussionist Frank Perry – form the core of this set, the two books are no less fascinating and valuable. There are pages of rare photos, reproductions of concert posters and dozens upon dozens of texts originally published by Quartz and Mirliton, as well as other magazines, such as articles written by Burwell and Toop about, respectively, homemade instruments and sound poetry for a 1976 issue of the art magazine *Studio International*. While much of this material is not directly connected to Quartz/Mirliton, its ancillary value is clear, and in the end this set serves as an invaluable archive of a creatively vibrant community from a very tumultuous era.

At the conclusion of his introductory essay Toop recollects his ambivalence about the prospect of accepting Frank Maier's proposal. "I felt unsure of elevating (if that's what it is) such obscure, scrappy artefacts of process to the status of archival treasure (if that's what they are). On the other hand, Paul Burwell's death in 2007 was a sharp reminder of the fragility of life lived in marginality and sustained integrity. Paul had dedicated himself to a particular path and remained true to that, despite its sometimes catastrophic effects."

Obviously, this release is geared towards a select few with a rabid interest in musical fringes, but over time the exploratory work this group of musicians produced has only become more resonant, even if those efforts were decidedly ephemeral at the time. While Toop's archives will most certainly enjoy a sustained life, it's undeniably wonderful that his efforts here have organised such a sprawl of information with such focus and enthusiasm. His mediation leaves it all open to interpretation and further research, which is what so much of this work was all about in the first place. ○

The Holy Modal Rounders
Indian War Whoop/Live In 1965: 55th Anniversary Deluxe
Don Giovanni DL/2xLP

You could usefully say about The Holy Modal Rounders what Voltaire said about the Holy Roman Empire, that they were none of the things in the title. The noise Peter Stampfel and Steve Weber made was unholy, and their whole schtick seemed like a protest against the cool modal sound that had been middle America's soundtrack for years. It could have been worse. At one point, The Motherfucker Creek Babyrapers was mooted, though Stampfel always insisted that was a joke. Different times, perhaps. The Rounders emerged in 1964 on Prestige, the same label that had put out Miles Davis, but then quickly moved from old-time to psycho-delic.

By the time of *Indian War Whoop*, the duo had expanded with the arrival of Lee Crabtree on keyboards and the future actor/playwright Sam Shepard on drums, whose technique made Helen Wiggin of The Shaggs sound like Shelly Manne. As to the sound they produced, when the New Weird America and freak folk stuff came around, older porch-dwellers just thought it was The Rounders reborn. Brits thought something truly awful had happened to The Incredible String Band. The Rounders' latterday story was inevitably coloured with self-consciousness and a level of recrimination that finally ruled out a revival, which meant that the album archive took on a new importance.

This sumptuously illustrated 55th anniversary issue of the third record, paired with a solitary live disc, brings back the full-on insanity, combining headlong guitar and fiddle jams with riffed scenes from TV shows, Fugs-like acting out of fantasies, and experiments in pure sound. The reissued set comes with an essay from psych historian Jesse Jarnow and notes by Stampfel, whose writings for *The Boston Broadside* are also reproduced. Nothing from Weber, who died in 2020 but probably wouldn't have taken part, given the falling out, though he's written about with due fondness.

Indian War Whoop came out on the same label as Albert Ayler's *Spiritual Unity*. Poet Ted Joans likened Ayler's classic to hearing someone scream "Fuck!" in St Patrick's Cathedral. The Rounders' anguish was of a different order. America had gone mad. The melting pot had boiled over. Americans were, as Norman Mailer weirdly said, burning the body and blood of Christ in Vietnam. The Holy Modal Rounders were the voice of those in the hinterland who were just getting by, nervously watching the smoke on the horizon, unsanitised folk music erupting like sewage into an antiseptic music scene. Are they important still? Sure are.

Brian Morton

Jackie-O Motherfucker
Manual Of The Bayonet
Feeding Tube DL/LP

This archival dig of Pacific Northwest psychonauts Jackie-O Motherfucker's catalogue is for the true heads. Recorded in Portland, Oregon between 1999–2001 with nine members in various combinations contributing, *Manual Of The Bayonet* represents Tom Greenwood's group at their most transcendentally trippy. Some of these tracks appeared on limited edition CD-Rs and some are previously unreleased. Feeding Tube Records operative/*Wire* contributor Byron Coley intimated that *Manual Of The Bayonet* could be the first of a series of archival recordings by the former New Weird America figureheads.

The title track starts in media res with one of their most rhythmically tricky and metallic beats concatenating over Barry Hampton's undulating bass moan, Brooke Crouser's twinkling vibes and John Flaming's soulful, melismatic alto saxophone solo. Guided by drummer Jessie Carrot, "Manual Of The Bayonet" settles into a trance inducing groove, and it stands as one of the most intoxicating tracks in JOMF's 29 year history. "Breakdown" is another staggering, hypnotic procession of staunch beats, oneiric, Pram-like vibes, and minimalist guitar calligraphy.

The murky "Deep Sleep Blues" wafts like incense at a 3am seance, emitting hazed Angus MacLise vibes. Many longhaired ayahuasca gobblers aim for this sort of amorphous sublimity, but few achieve it with JOMF's nonchalant authority. "She Cuts Heart Shapes" is a raga rock mantra, laced with the sort of scorpion sting guitar textures with which The 13th Floor Elevators' Stacy Sutherland used to make the earth quake.

All five pieces here seem to be shards of one torrid streak of creativity in which JOMF forgo conventional song structure and the lysergic updates of traditional folk songs that had peppered their 2000s and 2010s output. Parrot's drumming is to the forefront, its robust, complex dexterity reflecting the influence of Can's Jaki Liebezeit. *Bayonet* represents the zenith of the group's revelatory forays into psychedelic improv.

Dave Segal

Greg 'Stackhouse' Prevost
Vintage Violence: Barbaric, Crude & Primitive 1975–1979
Mean Disposition LP

Greg Prevost is a legendary garage rock maniac from Rochester, New York. He is best known as the leader of The Chesterfield Kings, although deep diggers revere him for his work with an earlier band, Distorted Levels, as well as the wild fanzine he edited, *Future*. The Kings' debut single was released in 1981, and helped to kickstart the decade's flurry of garage punk revisionism. *Vintage Violence* is a wonderful and raunchy collection of mostly unreleased material, culminating in recordings by the early version of The Kings.

Predictably, my favourite tracks here are the cruddiest. There are several iterations of pre-Distorted Levels groups fronted by "Mr Electro" (a soubriquet Prevost earned via his collection of Danelectro guitars), the earliest of which is an edited version of a 20 minute long tune from 1975 called "Just Like John Cage Blues". It's an insane ruckus with shouting, mutant electric violin, spaced out guitar and thuggish beats, all combining to create a chaotic twister of sound. The excerpt is over too soon, but is a testament to the wide taste of Prevost, whose writing in *Future* was as likely to rave about Amon Düül or Beefheart as The Pretty Things or The Stooges.

The album unspools in chronological order, so the music becomes more organised as it evolves, yet the whole first side is as raw a blast of proto-punk noise as I can easily name. The B side opens with Distorted Levels' brilliant avant garage single "Hey Mister/Red Swirls" then traces the early work of the band that would become The Chesterfield Kings. This involved moving from playing cracked original material into doing mostly covers for a while – The Chocolate Watchband, The Sonics, etc – but their sound remains great, and there was really no one else doing as deep a dive into the *Nuggets*/*Pebbles* universe at the time (apart from Los Angeles outfit The Droogs, who went for a cleaner approach).

As the 1980s broke and evolved, garage rock scenes popped up all over the globe, and some incredible records and music resulted. But Greg Prevost was one of the guys to light the first match. This album is proof he was drenched in combustibles well before that.

Byron Coley

Pharoah Sanders Quartet
Live At Fabrik
Jazzline Classics CD/DL/2xLP

This release, in a series of live recordings from the Fabrik venue in Hamburg-Altona, has become in memoriam – tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders died at the age of 81 in September 2022. On this superb date from 1980, he appears with John Hicks (piano), Curtis Lundy (bass) and Idris Muhammad (drums).

When Sanders moved to New York in 1962, Sun Ra suggested he change his name from Ferrell – sometimes written Farrell – to Pharoah. He joined The Arkestra, then made his debut as leader on ESP-Disk' in 1964. The following year he joined John Coltrane's group. During the 1970s and 80s, he renewed his exploration of jazz standards and Coltrane compositions.

It's at this point that we catch Sanders here. He's retreated from expressionist fire music to a kind of free jazz classicism. Each track has a groove, and is modal or modal tending, with free jazz gestures. Pianist John Hicks is an excellent exponent of this music, and Idris Muhammad an inspired drummer. Only the outstanding bassist Curtis Lundy, 25 at the time of recording, is still alive. The band are adept at creating tension and release in modal jazz, to incredibly exciting effect. I heard them at Edinburgh's Queens Hall a few years later, with Bill Henderson replacing John Hicks. It was one of the most memorable jazz gigs I've been privileged to hear.

Sanders had a big, gorgeously rich tone, freighted with overblown and split tones that made for passionate outbursts – what *The Wire* writer Graham Lock referred to as his "rooster calls". His control of multiphonics was uncannily expressive, his huge sound subtle and nuanced. The wonderfully intense performance of "You Gotta Have Freedom", notable for those rooster calls, rivals that on *Africa* (1987) with the same quartet, and can be added to the canonic versions of this Sanders

composition. "It's Easy To Remember" is a tender tribute to the version on Coltrane's *Ballads* album.

The much covered "The Creator Has A Masterplan" from *Karma* (1969) gets an exhilarating interpretation. "Greetings To Idris" is a beautifully plangent original. This is visionary music – as good as jazz gets.

Andy Hamilton

Robert Schroeder
Floating Music
Spheric CD/DL

From its formation in 1978 to its effective self-destruction in 2002 (literally – all remaining stock was destroyed), German label Innovative Communication served as the benchmark and bastion for the subcategory of synthesizer music known as Berlin School. A bit like prog rock's instrumental electronic younger cousin, it's a mode often at odds with itself – virtuosic but predictable, austere in mood but baroque in sound.

The work of IC's co-founder, the late Klaus Schulze, encompassed this niche but also sprawled far beyond its confines. The same is true of Aachen, Germany based composer Robert Schroeder, whose second LP – originally released on IC in 1980 – has just been remastered, reissued and made available via the Spheric label's webshop and the artist's Bandcamp. Time has altered its substance in unpredictable ways.

The sleeve of Schroeder's debut from the year before, *Harmonic Ascendant*, bears the acronymic slogan "NEM: New Emotional Music" but its descendent is less proscriptive in its agenda. *Floating Music* indeed floats, in places, though it more often funks, tiptoes, arpeggiates and noodles. It captures that moment when Berlin School began to shed the subtlety of its kosmische origins, grasping instead for grandeur, pomp and action – a shift echoed in the greater cinematic baton pass of (early) Tangerine Dream to Jan Hammer. The trickledown from this transition is still being felt: in the utopian cheese of vaporwave, synth-wave, nu-disco, and a thousand YouTube synthesizer influencers.

Heard in the context of 2023, the pleasures of *Floating Music* are largely historical. The nine minute title track opener is an opus of slap bass space groove, simultaneously sleazy, celestial and – to a modern listener – a touch comic. "Pastime" and "Rotary Motion" skew more soundtrack-like, stirring themes for long zooms into drama, whereas "Shadows In The Night" tries a little of everything – soaring strings, stargazer lament, sci-fi bleeps. A bonus track exclusive to this Spheric edition is just an abbreviated collage of the whole album played at 33 rpm instead of 45.

Subsequent decades saw Schroeder attempt all sorts of variations on the formula, peppering his cosmos with synthpop, lounge, electronica and video game music (there are even two volumes of a series called *Club Chill*). But *Floating Music*, in both title and practice, confirms the slippery truth that music is never static. It shades and fades into new meanings or irrelevancy beyond any agency of its creator.

Britt Brown

Louis Stewart
Out On His Own
Livia CD/DL

Irish guitarist Louis Stewart was core to Dublin's jazz scene, except for periods during the late 1960s and 70s when he lived in London and worked with Tubby Hayes, then Ronnie Scott – though he toured internationally. After his death in 2016, Irish President Michael Higgins gave a eulogy.

Recorded in 1977 for a small Dublin label, *Out On His Own* is Stewart's finest and most adventurous album. Often, thanks to double-tracking, he accompanies himself. The improvising, on a beautifully conceived programme of standards and jazz compositions, has a pure distilled lyricism. The repertoire is distinctive, with compositions by Steve Swallow, Charles Lloyd and Chick Corea. "General Mojo's Well-Laid Plan", by Swallow, is a piquant example.

Stewart should be spoken of with Wes Montgomery, Tal Farlow and Jim Hall. But his recorded legacy as leader is slight. As colleague Ronan Guilfoyle comments in an online obituary, by far the most satisfying recordings under his own name were made in the late 70s, when he worked regularly in London, building a career.

But even those releases tend to be problematic for different reasons. *I Thought About You* with John Taylor, Sam Jones and Billy Higgins, also on Livia, deserves reissuing, not least for the guitarist's subtle and interactive accompaniments.

Andy Hamilton

The Stan Tracey Quartet
Jazz Suite Inspired By Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood
Resteamed LP

In *Music Outside: Contemporary Jazz In Britain*, musician and writer Ian Carr describes Stan Tracey as "one of the most individual and most vital musicians in Britain in the 1950s". However, in the book's postscript Roger Cotterell says that by the time it was first published in 1973, just eight years after the release of *Jazz Suite Inspired By Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood*, the work of Stan Tracey had fallen out of favour. Listening to this vinyl reissue – which comes courtesy of Resteamed, the record label founded by Tracey's son Clark – it's difficult to see why.

Inspired by the 1953 BBC broadcast of Dylan Thomas's radio drama, Tracey composed a suite of eight pieces. On the recording he is joined by Jackie Dougan on drums, Bobby Wellins on tenor saxophone and Jeff Clyne on bass, all of whom – along with Tracey himself – are on incredible form. The opening moments rumble beneath a short section of tumbling percussion, before "Cockle Row" moves optimistically into lyrical saxophone and pinned down bass, garnishing the lot with understated trills of piano. On "Starless And Bible Black" the tone changes as Tracey lays down a series of nocturnal chords over which Wellins produces equally inky saxophone textures. "Lost My Step In Nantucket" emerges into more riotous circumstances, piano and percussion shambling together as though falling out of a bar.

These changes in tone feel effortless and subtle, a large part of which is to do with pace and weight – what Tracey and his players capture is the rhythm and tone, not just of Thomas's words, but also of Richard Burton's 1953 narration. This reissue and recent rereleases of Tracey's interesting 1970s projects – such as *Inclusivity* by Splinters, an ensemble in which he featured alongside the likes of Tubby Hayes (see *The Wire* 456) – mean that the time is right for a proper re-evaluation of his work.

Spenser Tomson

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New music books and publications

Spectral Sounds: Unquiet Tales Of Acoustic Weird
Manon Burz-Labrande (Editor)
British Library Pbk 315 pp

In 1866, Irish writer Ruth Mulholland, then aged 25, published a spooky story in *All The Year Round*, a periodical edited by Charles Dickens. She was two years old when Dickens exhibited ghostly expertise with *A Christmas Carol* (1843), in which we're told "Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes". Mulholland developed an interest in sound's potential for horror, and vice-versa. Titled "The Haunted Organist Of Hurly Burly", her tale involves a strange musician claiming to be betrothed to the deceased son of the organ's caretakers.

"Hurly Burly" and 13 other stories comprise *Spectral Sounds: Unquiet Tales Of Acoustic Weird*. Edited by Manon Burz-Labrande, a researcher and lecturer at Austria's University of Vienna, the book is part of the British Library's Tales Of The Weird paperback series. Thematically linked sections highlight strange utterances (Thomas Street Millington's "No Living Voice" from 1872), audible presences (Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's "The Day Of My Death" from 1868), and the post-apocalyptic soundscape (MP Shiel's "The House Of Sounds" from 1911), among other eerie tropes.

Time does peculiar things to language. Expressions become – in LP Hartley's formulation – foreign. Hartley's horror isn't collected here but we do get Edith Wharton and Edgar Allan Poe's "Siope – A Fable" (1837), thankfully more obscure than "The Tell-Tale Heart". The book contains aged sentences that cause the reader to wonder how something once declarative becomes mystifying. Are these Lovecraftian prose poems casting the unfathomable oddness of our world? Oftentimes no, just plain English rendered weird by the years.

A few paragraphs into the opening story, Florence Marryat's "The Invisible Tenants Of Rushmere" (1883), we're told by the narrator, a physician about to inadvertently rent a haunted house: "The hostages which I had given to fortune had made that strenuous action which attention to my numerous patients supplied incumbent on me." This seems to mean the doctor works too hard; the reader may sympathize. Placing such a phrase early in the book was wise: it signals the reader to keep alert. Here be linguistic dragons.

Anxiety proves more impervious to time than does language. Archaic as some of the wording in *Spectral Sounds* may be, the many sources of its dread are familiar, occasionally to the point of feeling samey. Note the "whine of a door" and how "the wind whistled in at the keyhole", not to mention the "curse of silence" and countless unidentifiable voices from beyond. These same evocations serve contemporary thrill writers and seekers alike to this day. Part of what makes sound so powerful a narrative tool is that the stories' authors and characters are equally aware of the symbolic portent inherent in the ear's duty as the human nervous system's alarm. Algernon Blackwood, in his "A Case Of Eavesdropping" (1906), sets a scene this way: "All was still but the howl of the wind, which to his ears had in it a note of triumphant horror."

The scariest stories leave their mark. You close a book, exit a cinema, or power down the TV only to find that the images, the sounds, the psychic imprint, linger. One additional impact from *Spectral Sounds* – more obsession than haunting – is the wealth of further readings, both academic and fictional, recommended in the volume's introduction and each story's helpful preface. Consider yourself forewarned.
Marc Weidenbaum

Dance Your Way Home: A Journey Through The Dancefloor
Emma Warren
Faber & Faber Hbk 416 pp

Appropriately enough, this book is in constant motion. Its framework is simultaneously memoir, history and exploration of the human mind and body, and it oscillates between these modes, shifting perspective and location endlessly. On any page you'll find multiple voices, the action flipping from Orpington to Rwanda, or from Stoke-on-Trent to Chicago, in a moment, a zooming in and out from broad historical sweep to images of moving crowds to micro-personal detail or insight.

But for all that, it keeps returning to one place: the dancefloor. And even more specifically, to long established journalist Emma Warren's own feet, on specific dancefloors, and to what they were doing: how her feet moved, what shoes she was wearing, what those floors were made of, how it felt. It's hard to think of a better, or more literal, way that a complex narrative could be grounded. This book dances around but is also firmly rooted in the very experience of dancing.

It draws us from Warren's parents' youth on the English south coast, through her own childhood in Kent, student days in Manchester, working for *Jockey Slut* and *The Face*, parenthood, community organising and on. Each time we get a sense of where dance was in her life, from infant school tap and ballet, through youth club discos, funk and soul clubs, acid house, 90s superclubs, drum 'n' bass, dubstep, UK funky and into the myriad of jazz-adjacent fusions of the past decade.

But every step of the way it fires off backwards in time and across continents, digging into the roots of specific dance moves and styles, the functions of dancing for social groups and movements, its effects on the human brain. First- and second-hand sources are quoted constantly. From these Warren shares specific memories from keystone musicians, promoters, academics and scientists with insight into the dance.

In this way, it feels very similar to Jude Rogers's *The Sound Of Being Human* from last year, which also used memoir as a springboard to examine the science and social function of music. But where Rogers was looking at the echoes and abstractions of memory, Warren keeps the focus tightly on physicality – of experiences and the building blocks of culture passed from hand to hand, body to body. And her language has a deeply satisfying physicality to match, as in: "Our gestural polyphony changed the temperature, too, heating venues up with human-generated humidity."

Despite its omnidirectional approach, this core keeps its momentum like a groove running throughout, and it really works on all its intended levels – and simply as a polemic in favour of dancing, whether in clubs, at home or professionally. Looking at subcultural evolution through the dancer's lens – reminding us, for example, that some of the most crucial dance musicians like A Guy Called Gerald and Shut Up & Dance were trained, even professional dancers – provides endless vital insights. And Warren's phrase making provides plenty of pithy reminders of her fierce sense of purpose. "Culture matters when everything else falls away," she says. "You can't eat culture and it doesn't pay the rent, but it does provide pride and history, which are useful starting points for recovery."
Joe Muggs

I Thought I Heard You Speak: Women At Factory Records
Audrey Golden
White Rabbit Hbk 528 pp

The story of monolithic post-punk label Factory Records, "the beating heart of Manchester", has been well-mined and documented via books, in the form of memoir, biography and historical narratives, as well as in the films *24 Hour Party People* (2002) and *Control* (2007). All of the members of New Order apart from Gillian Gilbert have published books about their lives in music. Most of them have written more than one, actually. Everybody knows and recognises the names Tony Wilson, Rob Gretton, Martin Hannett and Peter Saville as key figures in Factory's history, but woefully, less commonly documented is the labour from a significant cast of women in bands, alongside women who worked backstage and in offices in a multitude of roles to ensure the smooth and successful running of the label on a day to day basis.

In 2016 Jez Kerr from A Certain Ratio tweeted: "Factory Records had three strong women during its history making sure s*hit happened: Lesley Gilbert, Tracey Donnelly, Tina Simmons." These names should be just as recognisable, and with this book their stories are finally told.

The autobiography of saxophonist and composer Henry Threadgill opens an insightful window into Chicago's avant jazz scene

By Andy Hamilton

Another worldly: Henry Threadgill

Easily Slip Into Another World: A Life In Music
Henry Threadgill & Brent Hayes Edwards
Alfred Knopf Hbk 368 pp

Saxophonist and composer Henry Threadgill, born in 1944, is a dominant figure of Chicago's avant jazz scene. As he explains in this excellent ghost-written autobiography, his attitude to authority was always ambivalent. He was expelled from school for persistent drunkenness, but responded well to saxophone teacher Jack Gell at the Chicago School of Music. Anthony Braxton was a fellow student: "[Gell] would tell Braxton that he needed to pay better attention and play 'more like Threadgill'. And he'd be simultaneously telling me the same thing [in reverse]." At college he got to know Joseph Jarman, Roscoe Mitchell and Muhal Richard Abrams.

Tough tenor Gene Ammons was an early hero – his sound "wasn't so much loud as it was big: an expansive outpouring that would permeate everything". Sonny Rollins grabbed him more than John Coltrane: "He was my ship. It was Sonny who took me through." Holiness church was a vital influence. Threadgill began on tenor, taking up alto saxophone after wowing the congregation at Langley Church of God.

Threadgill is deep. He's a composer as much as a saxophonist; influences included Schoenberg and Varèse as well as jazz. He criticises traditional teaching: "The people who teach you, and the people who hire you... want you to do the same old thing. It can destroy your development... to engage in [Coltrane's solo on "Giant Steps"] physically... is only to contaminate yourself... Practice doesn't make perfect; practice makes permanent." His composition teacher Stella Roberts "never told me anything. And that's why I learned so much."

Vietnam is central to his story. He volunteered in 1966, which meant he could serve as a professional musician. But arrangements of patriotic songs upset the military authorities, and he was punished by deployment to Vietnam as a musician who was also an "infantry grunt". "Everybody that came out of that... war was fucked up," he comments. "You acquire a heightened sensitivity to sound," he adds. "Listening can be a matter of life and death... such a profound transformation of your understanding and perception can't help finding its way into what you're doing."

After his return, he noticed a hubcap display on Maxwell Street Market. He liked their sound, and so created the hubkaphone, which I remember him playing with Air. Like the AACM, he was fascinated by 'little instruments' – Braxton had a "garbage can machine". Sadly, because of its physical demands, Threadgill hasn't performed on hubkaphone since 1994.

Threadgill formed Air with Fred Hopkins and Steve McCall. Their first project arose from ragtime arrangements for the play *The Hotel*. Here he makes a vital statement: "There's a tendency to underestimate the intellectual content in Black music... as though we don't possess a sophisticated understanding of what we're doing." That should never happen with Threadgill. Surprisingly, he explains, 90 per cent of the music of Air is notated.

He moved to New York in 1976, participating in the loft scene. With his Sextett he explored "neo-ragtime". There were seven players but six parts – the two drummers shared one part, their two drum kits tuned chromatically. Briefly in Cecil Taylor's Unit, he tried to take his cue from alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons: "I wasn't really a 'free' player. My music might defy conventional diatonic harmony, but I didn't tend just to blow." He began Very Very Circus when he "just started hearing something else". Projects of the last 20 years of Threadgill's career are discussed more briefly. This excellent book is entertaining, insightful and affecting. ○

In this first-hand oral history account of Factory from the inside perspectives of the women who were the backbone of the label, New York based writer and radio presenter Audrey Golden brings together nearly 100 interviews which document the cultural, musical, technological and historical importance of women who contributed music, art, design and critical administrative duties to the organisation. And with its Section 25 yellow cover and elegant Factory Records-styled typography, *I Thought I Heard You Speak* is an object of beauty in keeping with the label's distinctive record sleeves.

Women were key players in post-punk and here, Golden illuminates the women musicians of Factory: Carolyn Allen from The Wake, Lindsay Anderson and Lita Hira from Stockholm Monsters, Angie and Beth Cassidy from Section 25, Ann Quigley from Swamp Children, and many more pioneering women tell their stories.

Rather than using a chronological approach, Golden has structured the book thematically to explore different facets of the scene including the musicians, the opening of the Haçienda, live gigs, technology, art and design, management and promotion, and a particularly fascinating dive into the backstory of New Order's "Blue Monday". The biggest selling 12" of all time, Golden charts how its success was largely thanks to the women who oversaw the logistics of the release – from negotiating sales and distribution, to pressing and licensing. Gillian Gilbert offers her insights into how the band crafted the track, while Tracey Donnelly, Laura Israel and Lesley Gilbert recall their crucial roles in record production, video editing and overseeing labels, supply and shipping. What becomes clear is that Factory was an ideas-driven label and the women behind the scenes helped keep it functional.

In the book, the label's PR manager Donnelly explains how the legendary Factory numbering system had a practical function. "It helped with the chequebook. It was quite literally a cataloguing system. So when you'd make out cheques, you'd use the numbers."

Within six months on the job, income from overseas licensing had trebled under Lindsay

Alan Nahigian

Ivor Cutler in Craig Murray Orr's studio

Reade's stewardship. Tony Wilson's ex-wife, Reade's immensely savvy contribution to the label has been underplayed in Factory's history until now.

The oral history format works well here. Golden has compiled her interviews and finessed them into a narrative that allows distinctive personalities and voices to shine through, adding a multifaceted richness and authenticity. The beauty of this format is that when thoughtfully pieced together, direct quotes allow many stories to be illuminated that would otherwise be edited out and lost through a more narrative based approach.

Kiran Dass

Ivor Cutler: A Life Outside The Sitting Room
Bruce Lindsay
Equinox Publishing Hbk 254 pp

Equinox have packaged this biography of Ivor Cutler in their Popular Music History series, but music, as the book proves, is only one side of this particular story. Cutler was not so much sui generis as pro omnibus, with a steady creative output from the late 1950s until his death in 2006. There were songs, spoken word pieces, stories, poetry, his own programmes on radio and TV, autobiographical projects like *Life In A Scotch Sitting Room Vol 2*, performance art like his 'stickies' (little stickers with Jenny Holzer-esque slogans), and a gaggle of well-received children's books. Happily, Bruce Lindsay covers all this activity in more or less equal depth.

Cutler himself preferred to be called simply a "humorist". Despite this, many of his pieces were not so much funny as surreal, melancholic, or downright disturbing: witness the theme of drowning in "A Bubble Or Two", from the album *A Flat Man* (1998). Lindsay favours *Velvet Donkey* (1975) as the best record, though my own preference is for *Privilege* (1983), produced by David Toop and Steve Beresford. According to Toop, Cutler was resistant to the pair's experimentalism. He stuck instead to his usual short and simple arrangements, typically with just his creaky harmonium. But this stubbornness could lead to beauty, as in the case of the ten little volumes of poetry published by Arc Books. It turns out that Cutler asked for the books to be small enough to fit his own shirt pocket. The publisher measured Cutler's pocket on the spot, to make sure.

A Life Outside The Sitting Room takes the argument that Cutler's career only got going from 1969, when the first of many John Peel radio sessions gave him a proper home. Peel turned him from a mainstream curio into a kind of quiet punctuation mark for the UK's younger, noisier music scene. It's at this point that the book moves from strict chronology into themed criticism: one chapter on the subsequent albums, one on the stage career, one on the books, and so on. The peak of Lindsay's impressive research, however, is the section on Cutler's Glasgow-Jewish upbringing during the 1920s and 30s; this comes with birth certificates, census returns, social history studies and enough addresses to organise a walking tour.

For all his noted eccentricity, Cutler had a conventional job for the bulk of his life. He was a primary school teacher, and a good one too, according to his former pupils. In the mid-1960s, following one marriage and two sons, he took up solitary living for 40 years in a rented flat in London's Dartmouth Park, rarely travelling abroad. We learn that he had a long relationship with the poet Phyllis King, though there were also quite a few less successful attempts at chatting up younger women.

Lindsay's rich mine of archival findings includes a 1974 issue of *Free Reed*, the newsletter for concertina players, to which Cutler contributed a poem, plus a 1968 letter by the novelist Angela Carter, in which she praises Cutler's performance in The Beatles film *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967). There are a few puzzling omissions, such as no mention of the 2018 Cutler exhibition at London Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art (see the review in *The Wire* 419), but otherwise this book succeeds in giving Cutler the serious and comprehensive recognition he deserves.

Dickon Edwards

The Listening Biennial Reader
Brandon LaBelle (Editor)
Errant Bodies Press Pbk 184 pp

For the Wayúu people of northern Colombia and Venezuela, life began with an act of listening. As told by Daniela Medina Poch, an artist and researcher from Bogotá, "The world was created by a romance between the Rain and the Earth; to make the Earth happy, the rain chanted, and as it yodelled, Thunder and Lightning roared and released energy that allowed Life to emerge." But today, the Wayúu people find themselves increasingly hemmed in by noise.

Medina Poch's essay "The Land Of Thunder And Lightning – Energy And Colonial Footprint" deftly maps out the fractious relationship between different acoustic territories at play on South America's Guajira peninsula: the long consonants of the Wayúu language and the beating of Kasha drums; the "struggling engines of jeeps" and vallenato music on the stereos of interlopers from the cities nearby; finally, the "cacophony" of machinery at work in the foreign-owned Cerrejón open cast mine that intrudes onto traditional Wayúu land. Medina Poch traces these waves of sound further, to the banks of the River Spree in Berlin where she delivered her presentation at the 2021 Listening Biennial: on one side, the eerie silence of the Weizkraftwerk power station where coal from Colombia is processed into electricity; and just next to it, the steady thump from Tresor and Kraftwerk, where that electricity is processed into electronic music.

With participating collectives and venues on six continents, the Listening Biennial was an equally transnational affair. Taking place two years ago in July and August (another edition is planned for this summer), it was a kind of decentralised festival, with commissioned soundworks (by the likes of Khyam Allami, Jeph Jerman and Michele Chu) distributed to these international partners to present more or less as they saw fit, from gallery installations to DJ sets. Writing in his introduction to this volume, founder and co-curator Brandon LaBelle presents the event as a "framework for thinking further about listening and how we may come to foster its political and poetic potential, its material and imaginative shaping of things".

With his characteristic bent for the passive voice, LaBelle locates the Biennial's ostensible subject in the following terms: "Listening is put forward as what enables both localised, intimate, and communal relationships as well as global and planetary views, where listening may sense beyond the apparent and the legible." It's a tricky definition to parse, with its seeming paradoxes (listening "enables … views"; it can "sense beyond the apparent") and puzzling duplications ("global and planetary"). But beyond the studied woolliness of its editor, the present volume offers plenty of food for thought.

Sussex University's Kate Lacey, for instance, provides a fascinating exploration of the concept of slow radio. Taking in approaches from easy listening to acoustic ecology, the essay offers a rare note of caution, in a book otherwise largely Panglossian in its faith in the healing powers of listening, when she notes that "Self-care… through digitized slow communication, quietude, and silence has… been thoroughly appropriated by the accelerated consumer culture from which it promises its users an escape". Elsewhere, Sara Mikolai, a choreographer and interdisciplinary artist of Sri Lankan-German descent, is lucid and compelling in her account of finding new paths into the traditional Tamil Bharatanatyam dance through listening to the fluttering of leaves in the wind. But Medina Poch's essay, in particular, stands out for the clarity of its writing and the sharpness of its analysis.

Robert Barry

The Art Of The Straight Line: My Tai Chi
Lou Reed
Faber & Faber Hbk 310 pp

"Over the years I've been asked: how do you stay in shape? How do you take care of your back? Knees? Various joints that start to lose their elasticity as we age?" This comes not from the health and beauty pages of some magazine, but the longer text of a letter Lou Reed wrote to *The New York Time*s in 2010. Reed himself stops the possibility of any snorts of risibility from his putative readers quickly: "People… know that I probably shouldn't be

Craig Murray Orr

here – a study in reckless excess." Which is something of an understatement.

He is writing, of course, about his long engagement with tai chi, and in particular, his relationships with his teacher, Master Ren GuangYi. He started to become seriously involved with Chinese martial arts, and later tai chi, in the early 1980s: his brother-in-law was a serious student of the arts.

For Reed, taking on a systemic study that was first physical and then spiritual enabled him to break away from the destructive cycles – that "reckless excess" – that had held him for so long. He credits tai chi as saving his life: quite possibly the discipline that tai chi requires helped extend it, at any rate.

The Art Of The Straight Line is a curious book. Edited by Reed's partner Laurie Anderson, with Stephan Berwick, Bob Currie and Scott Richman, variously friends, collaborators and martial arts instructors, the book is an assemblage of voices above all, a kind of oral history about Reed's tai chi life. He wrote about tai chi, brought it (and Master Ren) on stage with him, taught the art, but, at the time of his death in 2013, the notes and sketches of forms (the choreographed sequences through which tai chi flows) were piecemeal.

Anderson et al have collated Reed's writings, along with testimonials for tai chi (and Reed's relationship with it) from many of their friends, among them Jonathan Richman, Iggy Pop, Wim Wenders, Tony Visconti, Metallica's Lars Ulrich and Master Ren himself. There are enough ordinary voices here – ie, the not so famous fellow travellers – to ground the book on a more level playing field. These friend-authored vignettes show more private, and personable, aspects of Reed. There is something sweet about Reed and Sterling Morrison showing the teenage Richman – a major Velvet Underground fan – how to shape certain forms or achieve certain sounds. It's the kind of insider anecdote that gives one pause to reappraise a figure, who for many (especially journalists) was experienced as fiercely antagonistic.

What is the art of the straight line, Anderson asks in her foreword to this book: "Tai chi is made up of circles, circles within circles." The straight line is, she suggests, a way of keeping one's orientation intact, of finding a way through intricacies, and that's where the artistry comes in. For Reed, a proselytiser for tai chi, this straight line also joined up philosophy, art, physical action and mental well-being in a flow of energy – qi – that, at its best, embraced everything, from the electric drones of guitar noise to the arc of a carefully executed arm movement.

Louise Gray

Linger On: The Velvet Underground
Ignacio Julià
Ecstatic Peace Library Hbk 244 pp

In recent years, fans of The Velvet Underground have been treated to a number of substantial projects that both further our understanding and continue the mythology of the group. First Todd Haynes's superlative documentary, then Lou Reed's ongoing archival project, and now *Linger On* – the archive of Spanish journalist Ignacio Julià presented as a luxurious book by Ecstatic Peace Library.

Like Haynes's documentary, *Linger On* is fundamentally a fan object, stemming from the author's lifelong "romance" with the band. Julià's interviews with band members and associates are punctuated with photo spreads, reviews and texts on elements of Velvet Underground history and aesthetics, like an upmarket, expanded fanzine. Its cover is a stylised version of the pulpy book the band took their name from, and a spread early on tells us the band's astrological make-up – two Pisces, two Virgos – in a nod to both the fannish enthusiasm of the project and The Velvets' mystical alchemy.

The band's story is told in retrospect, their members interviewed multiple times from the late 1970s onwards, with considerable shifting memories and contradictions between accounts. Through these recollections, The Velvet Underground's three year existence in their best known iteration – Lou Reed, Sterling Morrison, Moe Tucker and John Cale – becomes more enigmatic over the course of the book. Pivotal moments are revealed in anecdotal asides, like "Sister Ray" originating from a Chicago gig without Lou Reed, and with the band members on entirely different instruments.

The band is treated as a catalyst and a lingering presence, existing concurrently with its members' subsequent lives and careers. Julià makes deft connections between the violence and European sensibilities of Cale's *Paris 1919* and Reed's *Berlin*, and reports vividly from The Velvet Underground's 1993 reunion, as well as Cale and Reed's 1989 *Songs For Drella* collaboration. Both musicians are, of course, on fine petty form throughout, and their bitchy stories and contrary attitudes are their own kind of mythos. In one interview Cale claims that he's not interested in making records, as they are "a supreme waste of petroleum-based resources", although he changes his mind later. Sterling Morrison is charming and wry, even in what is likely his last interview, just weeks before his 1995 death.

Julià's 1978 interview with Nico is astonishing, both for her chillingly casual allusions to Nazi sympathy, and for her poetic take on her musical process: "It's not a harmonium, it's an orchestra," she says of her core instrument. Two interviews with Moe Tucker offer a rare insight into the work – and often challenging life – of an overlooked group member, who speaks especially candidly about turning the limitations of her songwriting and singing into a guiding force of her solo work.

Linger On ends fittingly with a conversation between Julià and fellow fan Todd Haynes. Reading this rich book, I thought about my own relationship with The Velvets – as will surely every fan who gets their hands on it. Even though I've spent over 20 years of my life listening to them, and estimate I've heard their debut at least a thousand times, I still feel somewhat unqualified to present anything like a definitive take. The crux of their appeal is inherently unknowable, and so any writing about them has to not only be confident in absorbing this mystery, but furthering it. *Linger On* has a central tension, an almost sensually alluring reveal/conceal of its subject, that fans will recognise as a mirroring of this peerless group.

Claire Biddles

Sonic Meditations
Pauline Oliveros
PoP&MoM Pbk 33 pp

In a 2002 interview with Miya Masaoka, Pauline Oliveros cited Yoko Ono's event scores as one of three key milestones in her own development. Nowhere is this admiration clearer than in the spellbinding concision of the early 1970s text instruction scores that comprise Oliveros's *Sonic Meditations*: the perfect format to crystallise a longstanding interest in composing structures for group improvisation, inaugurating the paradigm shift to listening as the central locus of her composition. While the ubiquity of Ono's scores were cemented in her book *Grapefruit* (1964) with its many editions, it is both noteworthy, and perhaps surprising given how synonymous her *Sonic Meditations* has become with Oliveros's own oeuvre, all the more so posthumously, that this handsome yet unassuming purple gloss volume is their first stand-alone book.

As much as sharing in this wider avant garde lineage, *Sonic Meditations* has had its own distinct publishing history as the kernels of what would come to be termed Deep Listening, with its proliferating communities of practice, beautifully reflected in this new book. The genesis of *Sonic Meditations* is in the ♀'s Ensemble that met weekly in Oliveros's own home, collapsing the performer/audience hierarchy through a shared listening. *Teach Yourself To Fly*, *Greeting Meditation* and several more are listed as repertoire in an unpublished 1971 ♀'s Ensemble information pamphlet in Oliveros's archive. The scores themselves were first printed the following year in the tenth issue of *Source*, guest edited by Alvin and Mary Lucier. By no means Oliveros's first contribution to this influential score magazine, they are hand-written, overlaid onto photos of the ♀'s Ensemble, interjecting the DIY feminism of the earlier pamphlet in a manifesto-like electricity that propels this new body of work and thought into the hands of Oliveros's composer peers. By contrast, the later 1974 *Sonic Meditations* edition by her music publisher Smith Publications has the solemn print and layout of more generic sheet music, available over subsequent decades in Smith's catalogue by mail order – while the works also proliferated amid texts by Oliveros and others, shared in letters, photocopies, PDFs, and of course through their myriad performances.

The new book's core comprises the *Sonic Meditations* 1– 25 "dedicated to the ♀'s Ensemble and Amelia Earhart" alongside Oliveros's two introductions, exactly as in the 1974 Smith edition. Yet here they are flipped from horizontal manuscript into compact pamphlet and sandwiched between fore- and afterwords by Anne Bourne and Ed McKeon, each with their own respective proximities to the works, plus "a few messages from friends" Annea Lockwood, Laurie Spiegel et

al. Moreover, the publisher is PoP&MoM, an acronym for Pauline Oliveros Publications and Ministry of Maåt, the latter Oliveros's widow Ione's overlapping project: literally keeping it in the family. Most striking is the inclusion of four photo portraits of Oliveros by artist Fred Lonidier from a 1971 trip to the Joshua Tree desert: clad in sturdy androgynous workwear that reads as high hipster today, she sits cross-legged on a smooth boulder in enigmatic shadow in the cover image. Lonidier's sister Lynn was a founder member of ♀'s Ensemble, here setting *Sonic Meditations* in the time and (Southern Californian) space of their origins. Re-inserting some of that earlier electricity, the portraits elicit Oliveros's silent power, instituting her own strength in order to diffuse it outwards to others. As in turn the scores themselves do: each an exacting proposition offered to us for our own collaboration in the very many moments that have and will come to pass, "liquid tools" as McKeon puts it so eloquently in his text. It is a disarming modesty, thoroughly resonant with the works themselves, that gives this book its immediacy: to be slipped into a back pocket or handbag, read, annotated and performed with or by many new hands and ears. Ultimately this shift into book form marks a profound critical mass of interest in Oliveros as a composer, artist and thinker that now extends well beyond the worlds of new music – while still here rooted in an intimate network of friends and colleagues.

Irene Revell

Sonorous Desert: What Deep Listening Taught Early Christian Monks – And What It Can Teach Us

Kim Haines-Eitzen

Princeton University Press Hbk 145 pp

For Kim Haines-Eitzen, the desert is both biblical and personal. An American, she spent her childhood in the Middle East, or Near East, reared by parents who, inspired by their Mennonite heritage, had moved from the US to Jordan to study Arabic and do humanitarian work. Born in the late 1960s, she associates her experience with serenity and fear alike, with the quiet expanse of the Sinai and the sirens of the 1973 Yom Kippur war. The shore of the Red Sea was her holiday playground.

Now a Cornell University professor of religion, Haines-Eitzen seeks to merge the personal and the biblical in a slim volume with a vaguely self-help-ish subtitle, *Sonorous Desert: What Deep Listening Taught Early Christian Monks – And What It Can Teach Us*. She achieves this goal through the humble act of sitting quietly, much like the hermits of yore.

Unlike those hermits, however, she has audio recording gear in tow. Since 2012, Haines-Eitzen has documented the sound of the places she visits and where she lives. The poetic codas to each chapter feature QR codes that, given the context, can be mistaken for the ornate initials that decorated ancient manuscripts. These link to online recordings she made around the world. Her tracks transport the listener to places like her family's retreat in Arizona and the canyons of the Wadi Qelt in the Judean Desert.

The key word is retreat. Despite the monastic act's association with solitude, a monastery is itself a community, and thus the notion of self-exile gets revealed here as something more akin to migration: from one life to another, from exterior to interior. In Haines-Eitzen's telling, such paradoxes inherent in the monastic impulse run deep. While Trappists take vows of silence, most monastic life is simply remote. Less explored in the book is the contrast (even conflict?) between personal discovery and selfless divinity.

The narrative moves back and forth between the wired present and the mythic past. In meaningful ways, little has changed, least of all the human propensity to complain about noise pollution. An early avatar of this disgruntlement is Antony, a celebrated hermit from roughly 1800 years ago who "left the noise and distractions of city life for the quiet of the desert".

We abandon civilization alongside Antony, and with other monastic aspirants. The ancient ones include the saints John Climacus, Paul, George of Choziba, and Eucherius, who said "no sound is heard in the desert save the voice of God". Haines-Eitzen politely disagrees: the desert is rich with sound. We witness her personal revelations (sometimes repetitively) in this regard, such as the idea that to listen while recording is to listen intently, and to relisten through the ears of the machine is to hear what one might not have otherwise. Likewise, she stops trying to capture the world "pure and pristine", without people in it, and comes to appreciate humans' sonic place in the environment. We also visit reverberant cave chapels, ponder the animism belied by Western monotheism, and learn lots of cool ancient Greek onomatopoeia.

Sonorous Desert is a book about seekers, among them the widely travelled author herself. Modern figures cited include Edward Abbey, Virginia Woolf, Gordon Hempton and Thomas Merton, each arriving at the same conclusion: the quest for external silence is ultimately one for internal peace. (Oddly, that list doesn't include Pauline Oliveros, who is synonymous with the deep listening mentioned in the book's subtitle.) Wandering into the desert provides a metaphor for the effort and time required. As Haines-Eitzen quotes Merton from 1962, foreseeing smartphone apps like Calm and Headspace half a century hence, "You can't have interior silence just by pushing a button."

Marc Weidenbaum

Listen: Jeph Jerman In Conversation With Aram Yardumian

Aram Yardumian, Steve Jansen & Jeph Jerman

Errant Bodies Press Pbk 144 pp

About 20 years ago, Jeph Jerman came home one evening to find a rabbit lying on his porch. Living out by the desert in central Arizona, cottontails were a pretty common sight. But there was something different about this one. It didn't move away when Jerman approached. "I eventually realised it must be sick," he tells Aram Yardumian in the long interview making up the bulk of this book, "so I watched it for about 24 hours." To make the creature more comfortable, he made a sort of deathbed for it out of grass. But he couldn't quite bring himself to put it out of its misery. And then he noticed, "It was making these sounds, something I'd not heard before." He recorded it.

Mixed in with the howling drone of desert winds and what might either be a vibraphone or the ident of a train station tannoy, that rabbit's dying breath sounds oddly squeaky, raspy. If I hadn't been told what it was, I probably would have guessed duck. But knowing the story can't help but add a layer of pathos to the track. When the piece was published on the *Compost And Height* website, it attracted "a lot of negative comments". Jerman himself had "felt weird about it". The recording languished on a shelf for some years before he mixed it into a piece of music. But the fact that he did – and that he had recorded it in the first place – exemplifies the peculiar openness Jerman exhibits towards sound, his restless curiosity and a certain odd mix of homespun simplicity and avant garde weirdness. "These were sounds that wouldn't be heard in any other circumstances," he tells Yardumian. "I find it impossible to separate the recording of the rabbit from the memory of the circumstance."

For much of *Listen*'s 144 pages, we are treated to a curious game of cat and mouse, as Yardumian repeatedly tries to find a frame of reference within which to place the work while Jerman deftly bats each one away. With increasing desperation, the former brings up such aesthetic-historical tentpoles as the 1980s tape underground, the Nurse With Wound list, ideas connected to acoustic ecology, Surrealist automatic writing, John Cage, minimalism... Each time, Jerman politely demurs. "To be honest," he says, of his first 1980s recordings, "I was just recording stuff that I thought might be interesting to listen to myself." His feelings about the work haven't changed much since. "If I find a sound interesting, I'll try and record it for later listening or use," he says. "Everything else is just folly, really." But in among this loose to and fro, there emerges an engrossing portrait of a singular artist.

Jerman can boast a discography running into the hundreds, most of it on tape or CD-R. He has collaborated with the likes of Al Margolis, Aaron Dilloway, Merzbow, Eric Lunde, and even – thanks largely to Thurston Moore – played Lollapalooza. Much of that output is fascinating, ranging from field recordings to (weird) rock bands, prepared guitars and jury-rigged instruments built from scratch, records made with the low frequency waves of the Earth's magnetosphere, and records made by dragging a tree through the streets. There is a fidgety, compulsive character to Jerman's oeuvre, a constant questing after sounds, patterns, rhythms, processes, relayed with what strikes me as a peculiarly American matter of factness, as if these were not really works of bizarre avant garde art but simply so many hand carved wooden chairs or patchwork quilts. But underlying that practicality there is a folk metaphysics that insists sounds are no more than sounds, needing no wider frame of reference – even as the hoarse squeak of a chronically ill bunny still points unfailingly towards the memory of witnessing its demise.

Robert Barry

On Screen

Films & DVDs

Still from Takashi Makino's *Emaki/Light* (2011)

The New Cosmos: Short Film Works
Takashi Makino (Director)
Spectacle Theater, New York, US

With the eruption of each trendy new streaming series, video game or TikTok barrage, the social definition of cinema seems to become more elastic and unwieldy. It's a good thing, then, and a healthy one, periodically, to make contact with cinema at its most negative – that is, scrubbed clean of all material incidental to the moviegoing experience at its most formal and absolute. In February, New York's vaunted Williamsburg micro-cinema Spectacle Theater provided one such opportunity with a retrospective of the works of Japanese film maker Takashi Makino.

The six enigmatic and uncompromised short films that comprise the programme, entitled New Cosmos, span two full decades of Makino's career. In a field where abstraction is common, Makino's films go to extreme lengths to obscure their real world photographic subjects through meticulous layering. The soundtracks too – sometimes recorded by Makino himself, though often with composers of note – provide their own spur of iconoclastic tension and commentary to a frequently alien and unmoored visual palette.

The programme's brief opener *Eve* (2002), the earliest film on the bill, would prove not only the most pictorial but the most self-referential: the microscope-close images of barbed wire, flickering in and out of view among various fluid and static-electric superimpositions, is accompanied by machinic groans that bring to mind the manufacture of, say, barbed wire. As the films proceed chronologically, such linear relationships will basically evaporate. *Still In Cosmos* (2009) hinges on an oscillation between a kind of graphite black and white grid and snowy static that explodes into colour, to swells of guitar feedback and percussion provided by Darin Gray, Chris Corsano and Jim O'Rourke.

Very near to the top of Makino's mind in crafting these works would seem to be the will to make describing them, or even describing their effects post fact, beside the point. As an awareness of clock time is gradually shorn away, what replaces it is an attention to the organic rhythm and breath-like pulses of the forms on screen, as in *Inter View* (2010), whose dreamy interplay of organ and guitar by Tara Jane O'Neil and Brian Mumford creates a second aural space, whose layering serves both as complement and question. Are sound and image, ultimately, incommensurable? The score to *Emaki/Light* (2011), improvised by Makino and painter Takashi Ishida, with an eccentric piano plinking to the undulations of evidently hand-drawn lines, places the two in a juxtaposition that is still evidently precarious.

O'Rourke's Iannis Xenakis-like contribution to *On Generation And Corruption* (2017), with its alternating ivory-tickling and metallic hiss, heighten the suggestion of Makino's alien inner/outer spaces as transmissions from an altogether post-human zone. In a remote Q&A following the programme, Makino recounted how digital technology had gradually taken a role in virtually every aspect of production; that digital editing in particular allowed him to build his images from collages of hundreds, even thousands, of superimposed images. The programme's final film, *Anti-Cosmos* (2022) – assembled in part from footage of propaganda films from Imperial Japan so assiduously collaged that their source is indecipherable – would seem to view history less as a source of inspiration than one of combustible fuel.

Its accompanying sounds – drones and field recordings courtesy of Lawrence English and Lasse Marhaug – bring this most abstract work to the programme's own self-delineated outer limits. With submarine sunbursts and caustic Day-Glo empyrean, they are limits that only the contemplative moviegoer – artificially cloistered, silent, still – can experience in full.

Ryan Meehan

Still from Takashi Makino's *Eve* (2002)

Courtesy Spectacle Theater

On Location

Festivals, concerts, clubs

Eva-Maria Houben
St James Garlickhythe, London, UK
There's a solid minute's pause between the saxophonist's gesture to indicate the start of the piece and the first actual audible note. It gives me a moment to cast my eyes about this large but oddly boxy church built by Christopher Wren in 1683, at the gold embossed lettering in block caps spelling out "Holy Holy Holy Lord God Almighty", at Andrew Geddes's painting in pale blue and sallow beige of Christ's ascension above the altar, at Artur Vidal, eyes closed and sax in hand over by the pulpit. And, in the centre of the room, wearing a woollen scarf and fleece hoodie behind a grand piano positioned at an angle between the pews, Eva-Maria Houben, poised, deep in concentration (Huw Morgan, unseen, sits upstairs at the great organ). When it comes, it's a long low pedal note from the organ, joined about 20 seconds later by the horn. Gently the sound between the two instruments swells before the first piano note enters. Minutes have passed.

Houben's playing is sparse in the extreme – a note here, a note there, a yawning gap between. Sometimes those gaps are filled with the gentle drift of organ and saxophone, sometimes not. Otherwise, there's the gentle swoosh of traffic from Upper Thames Street filtering through from outside. The church bells themselves toll every half hour or so but somehow it never seems intrusive. During the second piece, a saxophone solo called *by a departing light iii*, about seven minutes in, there's suddenly a burst of music from somewhere – a passing car, maybe, or a nearby bar. Heavy bass and drums thrumming in through the walls. For a moment, Vidal seems to be fighting against it. He blows a little harder, a slight rasp creeps into the note. Somehow he wins. His still gentle playing pushes back against the intruding noise which creeps gingerly back into the night. We return to the cool interior of Houben's music, the outside world far away once more.

There is something intensely private about this music. Thoughtful, ruminative, careful, it feels like a glimpse into someone's inner world. During the third piece of the evening, a solo for piano played by Huw Morgan with a structure like the movement of a Calder mobile, I happen to notice Morgan's hunched back slumping over the keyboard. It would feel somehow wrong to play such music with the stiff, upright posture of a standard classical concert musician.

This is the first performance by these three musicians together and it sounds like it won't be their last. Their playing together is exquisite, characterised by an incredible lightness of touch and a kind of dreamy, far-away sensibility. All the works played tonight are from the last few years – half of them from 2023 – and all bar one are receiving their premier this evening. This is the sound of Eva-Maria Houben's composition post-pandemic and she sounds, if anything, more like herself than ever before. At times it could be Webern played at quarter-speed; at other times more like Bach broken into splinters and swept beneath a thick rug.

But a few minutes into the organ solo *abhanden*, a piece that starts so softly it could be a cat burglar sneaking in while you sleep, a major triad rings out like a lightbulb coming on or a smile breaking out onto Buster Keaton's face. It's a standout moment in one of the night's most dramatic works. Placed at the fulcrum of the programme, just after the interval, the piece has an almost cinematic tension but with an elusive, ungraspable quality. As it comes to an end, the music seems less to stop than to evanesce, like mist.
Robert Barry

No Home + R.AGGS
Spanners, London, UK
On a late February evening I make my way to South London DIY venue Spanners to attend the launch of experimental grunge artist No Home's second album *Young Professional*. Situated in a small railway arch between Camberwell and Brixton, Spanners is a friendly floor for creative congregation. On any night, its rich and warm sound system, inventive lighting and capacity for visuals generate an atmosphere of immersion and engagement, and such is the intimacy of the space, the exchange of art and ideas from performers to audience is often palpable. I walk along the row of arches below Loughborough Junction's train tracks and enter the venue to be greeted with the sounds of tonight's support act, R.AGGS. No Home is on the door taking tickets, and the entirely self-organised event sparks with Spanners' DIY spirit.

I head to the front of the crowd to see Shopping and Sacred Paws member Rachel Aggs aka R.AGGS performing contemplative songs of love and heartbreak on guitar, violin and drum machine. They deliver optimistic melodies and sometimes pained lyrics with a beautifully natural voice, lots of eye contact and a smile – their juxtaposition of joy and melancholia a fitting prelude to No Home's performance.

No Home – the alias of London based musician Charlie Valentine – recently appeared on a compilation where contributing artists were asked to respond to R Buckminster Fuller's 1960s essays *Utopia Or Oblivion*. In his review of the release in *The Wire* 470, Spenser Tomson declared the album to be most affecting when the music sits "ambiguously between optimism and pessimism", describing how No Home's track "Plans" combines progressively optimistic layered chorale with "derailing" hums and crackles. It's No Home's persistent ability to hold optimism and doom in one hand that makes their music so vital and alluring, reflecting the mood of an era.

The artist lists *Young Professional*'s conflicting themes on their Bandcamp page: the slacker versus the ambitious, nature versus the city, the individual versus the group. Throughout the show these contrasts manifest through the surreal narrative of an emotionally struggling young professional, and the marriage of soft and harsh sound. Walking echoey guitar lines and spaced-out strums merge with determined, crunchy beats from their Korg Volca drum machine, each composition a raw, electrified folk ballad of contemporary society.

At the centre of the performance is No Home's upfront yet soulful voice. *"Use me"* they sing in their grungy slow-tempo vocal on album opener "I Wish I Was Somebody", then bringing in R&B vibrato over frenetic drums. On "Emerald Green Mirror", the booming opening line *"In the night I hear you call"* arrives stark and unaccompanied, before fuzzy guitar chords and a scuzzy techno beat shatter the voice's spell. Bold layering of rhythm and discordant sound teeters on the edge of chaos, but there's a great sense of release in No Home's voice that provides a tonic for any creeping confusion or claustrophobia. Above, several small monitors attached to the ceiling play a looped video documenting unremarkable happenings in an anonymous office space, and at times the view turns to Valentine for a cropped, close-up self-portrait. Though we've been asked to refrain from making our own recordings at the gig, the visuals suggest all guards are down and we're being let into the album's inner world.

As No Home closes their set, I find my mind zooming out and up from the railway arch like a drone, then visualising the dark city from a bird's eye perspective. Though intimate, the performance has led me back out into the night, where the music now hangs in the air with murky smog and burning stars.
Meg Woof

A Tribute To Derek Bailey
Roulette, New York, US
It's a tricky thing paying tribute to a rugged individualist. Nothing could be less appropriate to Derek Bailey's memory than trying to sound like him, yet it's hard not to want to hear his guitar during a weekend in his honour. John Zorn's weekend tribute to Bailey at Roulette in Brooklyn quite appropriately gathers musicians committed to spontaneity and to sounding like themselves. It's a tight three nights of short pieces and quick changes, each opening with a group of horns calling the evening to order.

The first night proves to be the most crowded, no doubt largely due to Laurie Anderson's presence. After a quick fanfare from Zorn's sax and the trombones of Jim

The Canadian festival is a musical summit of international collaborations and compositions addressing urgent political issues

By Xenia Benivolski

Women From Space
The Music Gallery, 918 Bathurst, Toronto, Canada

The fifth annual Women From Space festival opens on International Women's Day in Toronto with a Big Bang! – a multi-participant orchestra featuring many of the festival performers and organisers, led by Christine Duncan and Aruna Handa in a striking rendition of Handa's durational suite *Have You Seen My Sister?*. Shedding light on gender based violence endured by women during the pandemic, the work sits in the greater context of murdered and missing Indigenous women in North America, and the recent rise of American regulations that attack trans women and people seeking abortions. The assembly is a powerful start to the weekend, highlighted by the performance of an astounding cover of Yoko Ono's *Why?*, a wailing, lingering question that seems to possess the room.

Prefaced by a breathy, urgent collaboration between saxophonist Karen Ng and guitarist Jasper Stadhouders, and the joint work of vocalists Sarah Albu and Gayle Young, the opening night sets the tone for the week's weird, tasty jams with the questioning of space, agency and consciousness and our responsibility to each other and Earth's changing environment.

Collaborations prevail: some pre-existing, like Ng and Stadhouders and Albu and Young, and some that are arranged by the festival's organisers Bea Labikova and Kayla Milmine. A sonic conversation between woodwind performer Heidi Chan in a spontaneous collaboration with percussionist Naoko Tsujita and artist Mo:delic Arts (Vanese Smith) stands out. Chan's persistent woodwind solo, gently distorted by electronic pedals, is bolstered and sometimes challenged by Tsujita's inventive percussion which includes vibraphone, marimba, sets of keys and plastic toys. Projected images of seashells and desert land span above, put together live by Smith – altogether the performance strikes a fragile balance that somehow brings forth thoughts of a different time – of water memory, dried up oceans and the feeling of putting one's ear to a seashell.

This stellar act is sandwiched between two other experimental collaborations. The first, a sweet and well-intentioned interactive performance by sound artist Seylon Stills and shadow puppeteer Kristine White, is a bit underwhelming. The second, an anticipated dialogue by Angels And Demons (Amirtha Kidambi and Darius Jones) that translates some of the writings of Sun Ra into saxophone and voice compositions, has all the makings of a great work, but somehow in contrast with Jones's meandering, dusty saxophone, Kidambi's gleeful jazz delivery comes off as strangely uptight.

Percussionist Aiyun Huang presents three pieces, all in collaboration with other composers, the most interesting of which was created with Canadian Zosha Di Castri, whose project around motherhood inspired bells, sand and found objects interacting with the face of a drum, all against the backdrop of pulsating and distorted electronic sounds, angelic vocals, clicks, clacks, creaks and prickly scratches. This is followed by White Boy Scream, an experimental classical project by opera singer and composer Micaela Tobin whose captivating, spooky vocals and found recordings reflect on the history of colonisation of the Philippines, after which Lotte Anker leads a confident trio of saxophone, shimmery percussion and piano with Craig Taborn and Chris Corsano. But on the final night, a much-hyped dynamic collaboration between flautist Nicole Mitchell and poet, musician and all-around performer Coco Elysses leaves something to be explored: while the duo never quite settle on a rhythm, a few moments of mutual recognition produce interesting results.

The evening peaks at the first performance of Slovak-Canadian saxophonist Bea Labikova's solo project Mount Joy. Labikova plays the fujara, a large traditional Slovak overtone flute, while images of glaciers and tundra are projected around her. Coupled with electronic processing and used in improvisational, sometimes percussive ways, its folky sound all but mutates as it traces frozen landscapes, variously evoking marine animals, fog horns and the drama of the sea. This grand vibe is followed up nicely by Judith Berkson, whose crunchy, textured drones play against her prim, clear singing voice, as field recordings of birds, trains and other familiar, often invisible sonic agents evoke distance, change and nostalgia. Taking stock of a global pandemic, Women From Space is fiercest in those instances when it explores the passing of time. ○

Mount Joy

Vennie Tu

Losty of CyberMade collective at CyberPalace 3

Staley and Dave Taylor, Anderson falls into quick grooves with guitarist Mary Halvorson and electronic percussionist Ikue Mori that even the three of them might not have anticipated.

Mori and Staley's duos were a recurring high point of Roulette's annual calendar back when the venue was in Staley's Lower Manhattan loft. Hearing them in a trio with a suitably raggy guitarist Bill Frisell is exciting on several levels, primarily in the thick blanket of sound they lay down, standing in a tight circle at the centre of a crowded stage.

Anderson appears again in a trio with bassist Brandon Lopez and pianist Craig Taborn. Her electronics sound like a whole string section; Lopez and Taborn alternate between fullness and beat, sometimes together, sometimes apart. They are, maybe, the line-up most needing to be heard again from the first night,

The second night opens with a sax trio of Zorn, Caroline Davis and Matana Roberts, then some nice B-movie groove by Lopez, vibraphonist Patricia Brennan and David Weinstein providing laptop beats. Wendy Eisenberg plays new breed skronk with Taborn and bassist Henry Fraser and Frisell and pianist Brian Marsella play beautiful little impromptus like scrambled Chopin. Frisell returns later with Lopez, seemingly extending the earlier noir vibe, pushing at its edges, trying to make a form without a shape. Brennan starts a trio with Marsella and drummer Kate Gentile at a vigorous clip. Their quick rolls and near collisions suggest that the evening might have been missing some Tex Avery cartoon action. Marsella proves again and again how good he is at plugging quickly and fluently into any mood. A guitar trio of Eisenberg, Frisell and Halvorson finishing each other's rubbery sentences closes the night.

The third night begins with a quintet of Davis, Staley, Zorn, trumpeter Amir ElSaffar and saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins in a spontaneous suite, locking into four or five distinct sections in not too many more minutes. A duet by Brennan and pianist Arturo O'Farrill, full of complementary sonorities and sensibilities, makes a person glad to live in New York. After that and a slippery piece from Frisell's guitar and ElSaffar's santur, a conventional sax trio (Fraser, Wilkins and drummer Francisco Mela) seems downright radical: heavy rhythm, rumbling bass and squealing sax, timeless free jazz. Later, O'Farrill and Roeder find beauty in the jump step of NYC frenzy. If the tribute was to a Brit, it was still the music of urban polyglot.

Only on the final night do they bring the obligatory tutti finale: a dozen musicians and a lot of smiles. Oddly enough, Bailey's name isn't mentioned all weekend – although that might be seen as just as well by the departed master.

Kurt Gottschalk

Cyber Palace 3: New Order
Tongchuang Longteng Enterprise Building, Taipei, Taiwan

The beat drops, and the phones come up. On the second floor of the Tongchuang Longteng Enterprise Building is a 500 person venue that the Taiwanese cloud rap collective CyberMade have filled to the brim. With no fewer than 25 rappers on the line-up, Cyber Palace 3: New Order is quite the sweeping overview of Taiwan's up and comers, including K-HOW, SiNNER MOON, ANBA, NINI, as well as CyberMade's own Losty and Drogas. There's cola and caffeine drinks on sale for 50 NTD a pop – most of the audience is under the Taiwanese drinking age of 20 years old. But you could already surmise that this crowd skews young by the sea of phones bouncing up and down every time the mosh pit collapses into a mess of bodies – it's actually quite impressive how they manage to hold onto their devices while raging. A grumpier writer might decry the hyperconnected nature of this live music experience, but for CyberMade, perhaps it's precisely the point.

It's hard to keep track of who's performing, since I'm not familiar with many of the rappers outside of the CyberMade crew, and before I can get my bearings with one act, other rappers on the bill tag in; it's organised chaos, a choreographed cypher. What I do know is that ICYBOI is on when I arrive, as the large screen behind him helpfully displays his catchphrase *"ICE SO FREEZE"* rotating in 3D word art around a freezing emoji. Spitting over a diverse range of drill, Jersey club and house beats, ICYBOI's set is a sampler of the Taiwanese hiphop scene's interpretation of various Black regional genres and aesthetics. And the inspirations are all too clear for SiNNER MOON, whose dramatic entrance suffuses the stage in a red glow. He cribs a bit of Playboi Carti's "RIP" flow for "BLEED IT", yelping in AutoTune over a Pi'erre Bourne-type beat. But authenticity was never really valorised in Taiwanese hiphop, as the phenomenon of so-called PhD rappers in Taiwan might attest to; SiNNER MOON himself was a member of National Chiao Tung University's Hip Hop Research Society. His studies have borne fruit, as the energy is palpable in the circle pit.

By the time CyberMade take the stage, it's already past the show's original ending time of 11pm. But most of the audience has stayed – these are the artists we're all here for, after all. Losty steps up with the quintessential Taiwanese E-boy look: snapback, leather jacket over a white hoodie, loose-fit cargo pants, and a backpack in the shape of CyberMade's fluffy mascot MonMon. For the other acts, the crowd might have sang along to one or two of their songs, if any; for CyberMade, however, it's turned into full-blown karaoke. Losty's emo rap anthem "Kill Me, Bury Me" sounds like a choir as his fans simultaneously mosh, film, and sing the song's titular refrain. Losty and Drogas are equal parts Bladee and Ecco2k, crooning in AutoTune over iridescent synths and wistful guitar riffs. The phones, recording every moment, are part of the deal; Drogas grabs a lucky fan's device and takes a selfie, to her squealing delight. This is just what concerts are now, offline and online spectacle in equal parts, and CyberMade has embraced that reality, aware from the start their music is constituted by a cybernetic culture.

James Gui

Dither Plays Laurie Spiegel's *The Expanding Universe*
The Stone, The New School, New York, US

Electronic music isn't new, but the idea of it as repertoire is so unexplored it barely exists. This evening is one of the few samples of what is possible, and what might lie in the future: the four electric guitarists of The Dither Quartet playing their arrangements of selected tracks from Laurie Spiegel's 1979 album *The Expanding Universe*, one of the foundational classics of electronic music.

This is the opening of Dither's four night residency at The Stone, most of which is devoted to various kinds of improvisation, so this set stands out in more than one way. It also helps define the unique point that Dither has staked out, translating avant garde and new music traditions through the most populist instrument on the planet. When Dither play, everything collapses into guitar music. Dither ignore all the arguments about demolishing hierarchies and the self-conscious and self-regarding use of terms like genre-fluid by simply playing the stuff.

James Gui

The arrangements stay on top of the original notes and rhythms, but there are radical differences in articulation and timbre with picks on strings, along with how different it is when a musician plays a repeated phrase as opposed to using a sequencer (Spiegel herself played the guitar early in her music career, but *The Expanding Universe* was realised via Bell Labs computers). Dither play "Drums" and the original knocking rhythms coming together into subtle, grooving patterns, the four musicians (Taylor Levine, Josh Lopes, James Moore, Brendon Randall-Myers) finding ways to fit their own rhythms into each other's, just like a band.

As the layers come together, it starts to sound like a long-lost track from a Robert Fripp/King Crimson project, and the way this moves out of the original album and into new experiences, expanding Spiegel's own universe, becomes the centre of this remarkable concert.

On the other side of rhythm is texture and sound, how timbres can shift and change through attacks and as they sustain and decay. Opening with "The Unquestioned Answer", Dither's playing shares the warmth of the original track and adds specific sensations of performance and context. It's relaxed and gentle, the music coming out as luminous and holding time in this space, a soundtrack to the pedestrians and cars that pass by just outside the plate glass window on this chilly evening.

Last in the set is Spiegel's title work "The Expanding Universe". This takes up a near half-hour on the album, shifting slabs of crunchy oscillator waves that overlap each other and move back and forth in the stereo field. Here, they pass slowly from one musician to another, entirely resetting the piece as chamber music. Another major change, at least in this performance, is how quiet the playing is. This seems to come out of the basics of sound, the guitars trading square and triangle waves for more complex overtones, the players giving space for each sound to bloom and fade. The textures have a stimulating roughness, full of varied edges, but the overall sensation is pure ambience, sound waves cocooning the audience in the manner of later Japanese ambient music.

It's the same and also different: older ideas in a new idiom. Spiegel stands with Dither at the end, a huge smile on her face.

George Grella

URLAND
De Gabber Opera
Theatre Rotterdam, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Rotterdam is something of an outlier in the Netherlands. What it lacks in medieval cobbled streets and spindly townhouses, it more than makes up for in technicolored skyscrapers, wide open boulevards and modernist cuboid architecture. Then there's the city's cultural heritage: the legacy of gabber, the first truly Dutch electronic dance music. Blitzing together lightspeed bpms with sparse melodies and roared vocals, in the 1990s gabber surfaced as a predominantly white working class youth movement. At its height, there were chart-topping hits, Thunderdome parties throughout Europe, internationally acclaimed DJs, as well as a small but concerning Neo-Nazi fanbase.

Presented by the Dutch performance collective URLAND, *De Gabber Opera* is a hallucinatory reimagining of hardstyle rave's heydays through the lens of Euripides's *The Bacchantes* and the German operatic tradition. Exploring humankind's perpetual desire for sedation and ecstasy, cultural mythos and, more implicitly, the fascistic associations of both opera and gabber as 'high' and 'low' artforms respectively, the production is a surreal 70 minute escapade.

In the darkened Theatre Rotterdam, the booming pads of the first track "Dionysos" signal the show's opening. The sound is pulverising and cavernous, reaching all the way to the upper decks. Mezzo-soprano singer Annelinde Bruijs is joined by unrelenting kickdrums, the purity of her ethereal voice in stark juxtaposition with the penetrating bass. English subtitles are projected on a teleprompter, the lyrics setting up the themes of hedonist escapism and intoxication: *"Dionysus discovered the juice of the grape and introduced it to mankind/Stilling there each grief that mortals suffer from..."*.

For the inaugural scene, the four cast members of URLAND – Jimi Zoet, Ludwig Bindervoet, Marijn Alexander de Jong and Thomas Dudkiewicz – appear on stage encased in a glass vitrine, wearing Lonsdale tracksuits, bomber jackets and Nike Air Max trainers. Their wet-shaven heads glisten under the spotlights. Accompanied by a serene piano melody, they enact a repeated ritual – a cigarette is lit and cans of lager are passed around. Then, as the music swells, the beers are shaken and thrown violently. There's a pause before the men dutifully put on marigold gloves, pick up sponges and mop up the spilt alcohol. The awkward contrast between masculine bravado and domestic drudgery is hilarious, an effect that intensifies as the skit is performed over and over again.

A sudden blackout switches the monotony into chaos; sirens whirl and beats blare as the characters jerkily hakken dance through post-industrial, imaginary landscapes – bus stops, shadowy side streets and, of course, the cathedral space of the club. As the play progresses, the dancefloor descends into a bestial ritual, climaxing with one of the ravers donning a bull's head and being sacrificed atop the DJ booth. Afterwards, in the foyer, the atmosphere of unreality continues as the audience is met by stewards dressed in matching Dionysus tracksuits, designed by Ruben Verkuylen, selling vinyl records of the soundtrack.

While gabber's peak waned quickly after the millennium, in recent years, hardcore has enjoyed a resurgence. From Björk's 2022 album *Fossora* to the Institute for Sound and Vision's 2021 exhibition A Brief History Of Gabber, a fascination with the extreme genre endures. It's hard to situate URLAND's show within this context of retromania, however. Masterfully paced, and equal parts menacing and comedic, *De Gabber Opera* instead focuses on the pursuit of excess through the ages – the timeless longing for self-obliteration that transcends epochs.

Hannah Pezzack

Wet Ink Ensemble Presents: Winter Chamber Concert
Tenri Cultural Institute, New York, US

New York's Wet Ink ensemble have become less supergroup and more traditional, multifaceted new music ensemble in recent years. Through their Large Ensemble and artist residencies, they've extended their ranks while some of the core members have been drawn out of state by academia. Their annual Winter Chamber Concert at the Tenri Cultural Institute features a spare four performers, three of the ensemble's eight plus saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock (Wet Ink violinist Josh Modney had to cancel due to illness). But such is only counting musicians like beans in an altogether satisfying evening.

The programme opens with Eric Wubbels's *Axamer Folio* for saxophone and drum set played by Laubrock and Ian Antonio. Quiet overtones on soprano are matched by tones

URLAND performing *De Gabber Opera*

Julian Maiwald

from a snare head rubbed with rubber mallets before quick outbursts in near unison suggest Wubbels's usual, very metred terrain. It moves unpredictably – a single tom hit, a quick cymbal roll, a snap to the wood block – isolated and deliberate, while Laubrock plays long notes and fast flutters that could be an improvised solo if it didn't fall in sync with the drums for brief moments. In perhaps the most free of jazz formats and with all of the energy and exploration of open improv, but under the careful hand of preconception, lies the magic of the piece.

Wubbels takes his bow and heads straight for the piano, Antonio moving over to the vibraphone, for Jō Kondō's 1990 piece, *Aquarelle*. Tuned percussion in alternating chords bounces by at an easy count, phrases occasionally making their way through in a rhythmically simple, tonally complex and altogether graceful manner. The composer, now 75, writes music that can feel quintessentially Japanese while at times the influence of his acquaintance with both John Cage and Morton Feldman can be detected as well. Either/OR played his 1985 composition *A Scribe* at the Infrequent Seams festival in Brooklyn at the end of last year, and his name otherwise seems to pop up more than it used to. If Kondō is on the cusp of a revival, there are happy days ahead.

That Modney's piece was unfortunately, cut from the programme may have opened up more time for a sax duo by Ingrid Laubrock and Alex Mincek, heavily framed and processed by Sam Pluta. It may be more of a controlled situation than improvisation or composition (the programme credits all three; the musicians don't play from scores) but in any event it's big and loud and perplexing and wonderful.

The two tenors are folded and repeated, Pluta's fingers hovering over his touch screens like those of an an anxious magician. He takes over with a thunderstorm, Laubrock venturing a solo below, Mincek joining after a spell, and the horns rise to the surface before the surface drops out and Pluta – ever masterful at seeing and manipulating the big picture – reinvents it, casting their flutters into dissonant clouds. Mincek removes his mouthpiece and, blowing through the tubes, subsumes into the soundscape. Laubrock rises with a hard, heavy solo. Pluta plays the role of third sax, then morphs into a string section, then an orchestra of noise.

Kurt Gottschalk

Frequency Festival
Various venues, Chicago, US

The Frequency Festival grew out of a concert series conceived by *The Wire* contributor and former Chicagoan Peter Margasak. Recognising that modern classical, jazz and noise music have sounds and practices in common, he sought to bring their audiences together. Margasak has been based in Berlin since 2019, and the festival's seventh iteration introduced several European artists to Chicago over the course of a six day programme.

On a sold-out opening night, Bill Orcutt wields his guitar like a reverse lightning rod, discharging countless possibilities. His latest recordings are deep studies of unbridled lyricism, pungent tone and rigorous structure; elements of each manifest as brief phrases within a spontaneously stuttered, nonlinguistic soliloquy. Chris Corsano's drumming facilitates each switch in direction while sustaining a steady, boiling energy.

Two nights later and half a city away on the University of Chicago campus, Berlin based Julia Reidy uses voice, a custom-made electric guitar, and an array of electronics to create an endlessly receding virtual audio space. The instrument's movable frets enable Reidy to obtain precise tunings in just intonation, and the effect of hearing some notes burst out while others fade into a delay-refracted distance is like listening into a rainforest and hearing miles deeper than one can see. Their AutoTuned vocals, which often take centre stage on record, are a more elusive, flickering element within this rich sonic environment.

Sounding Limits: Music Of Pascale Criton presents a set of the French composer's work, which was originally developed in close collaboration with violinist Silvia Tarozzi and cellist Deborah Walker. For their Chicago debut, Judith Hamann takes the temporarily homebound Walker's place. Retuned to increments of 16 steps to a tone, the two musicians' instruments are transformed into tonal colour generators that emit complex rainbows of whistles, groans, hums and beating tones. The music's mesmerizing effect transcends the novelty of the unfamiliar sounds that they obtain using circular bowing motions and other unconventional techniques. it's stuff like this that gives credence to the notion that sound can transform one's physical state.

The next day, Hamann and Tarozzi play solo sets at Corbett Vs Dempsey gallery. Each models how attunement can be as essential as tuning, the former by combining the resonance of her cello and her voice, the latter by using exquisitely selected pitches to link the rumbles of a train outside, the cries of a baby in the next room, and Roscoe Mitchell's paintings on the walls into an organically integrated experience.

Back at Constellation, Austrian pianist Elias Stemeseder manages to make a fundamentals-oriented technique on a familiar instrument sound utterly personal. His controlled touch and command of long-form development form a rush of ten-note chords into music that feels like it is inviting the listener to step into its interior.

Greg Davis performs electronic music in the vein of his recent LP *New Primes*. But while the album offers a deeply meditative experience, in concert he uses the vibrational potentialities of just intonation and a robust speaker system to turn the entire room into an instrument. At different points, the high tones seem to be settling from the ceiling, and the bass to be coming out of the walls. He shares the bill with the eight-piece local ensemble a.pe.ri.od.ic, which debuts Swedish composer Magnus Granberg's *Aus Der Nacht, Von Den Wehen*. Unhurried and unemphatic, its rounds of long tones and brief punctuations feel like a musical expression of breath itself.

Bill Meyer

MaerzMusik
Various venues, Berlin, Germany

Berlin's MaerzMusik festival 2023 convenes around themes of otherness, screen-sharing aloneness, boundaries between listening and hearing. Artistic director Kamila Metwaly and its guest curator, composer Enno Poppe, compiled this year's programme. Metwaly's Egyptian/Polish roots inspire her promotion of works from previously unheard voices and her notion of 'untraining the ear', learning to override one's musical expectations. 2023 marks the opening of MaerzMusik's new open-access library space at Berliner Festspiele for gatherings and sharing knowledge and ideas on experimental music and audiovisual arts.

The festival opens at Haus der Berliner Festspiele with Michael Beil's *Hide To Show*, a multimedia performance by Nadar Ensemble, a group of eight musicians, each in a small cell with a slatted roller blind doubling as projection screen dividing them from the audience. They play instruments and perform TikTok dance moves, while opening and closing each roller blind. Clever sound and lighting leave the audience unsure of what is real or projected in this surreal post-lockdown era musical theatre.

Savvy Contemporary gallery is a hidden gem of brutalist architecture, run by a collective of artists and curators. Curator Anna Jäger suggests "forgetting is scribed in the politics of oppression" during the introduction to *Lakbayan*, or *Journey Of The People*, a project based on Dangadang Radio's emotive personal archive of often anonymous Filipino protest songs. Meanwhile, at the Daadgalerie in Kreuzberg, Nandita Kumar's exquisite sound sculpture comprises a punch card printing scroll passing through a pianola, performing music box tones from the punched words of 'fake news' haikus, while global news excerpts stream in the background.

Silent Green is a former funeral chamber. Its domed roof, octagonal shape and walls inset with small arches formerly for funeral urns provide an excellent acoustic, managed by sound engineer Jonas Kempel. Claire Chase performs five works for solo flute with dynamically charged percussive over-blowing, oversinging techniques. The wide entrance ramp down towards the packed main Betonhalle for Pauline Oliveros's *Sonic Meditations* doubles as a neon-lit venue for performance artist Liping Ting, writhing around in shiny aluminium sheets.

Noa Frenkel's love of science fiction is reflected in her stunning interpretation of a series of works for solo contralto voice with electronic treatments by Sebastian Schottke. In Dániel Péter Biró's *Hadavar* – in Hebrew, *The Word* – contact microphones and loudspeakers concealed inside a piano lid generate vocal feedback loops causing sympathetic resonance with two adjacent gongs, tuned to D and F respectively. These are elegantly crafted scored electronics, meticulously navigated by Frenkel, enriching her performance with the intimate feel of a duet with her sonic avatar self.

Oliveros influences are felt in Jakob

Ullmann's barely audible explorations of the threshold between listening and hearing, which are interesting conceptually but aural hard work in his second 40 minute piece. Elaine Mitchener, however, bursts onto the stage in a feast of sound, colour and movement, with her characteristic shouts, croaks and mutterings, backed by violin, double bass, bass clarinet, saxophone and percussion. The serious underlying message of Mitchener's Jamaican roots is poignantly marked by an instantaneous switch from cacophonous crescendo to sudden silence on the word *"gasp..."* with an extended motionless pause before resolving *"...ing for breath"*. She then stands on a chair reading from a roll of paper, the labels of cosmetic skin products, repeating *"transparent rosy radiance"*.

Jo Hutton

John Bence + Tara Clerkin + Don Mandarin/ Rastu And Om Shanti
Cube Microplex, Bristol, UK

Bristol based composer John Bence's second album *Archangels* is launched to a seated audience at the Cube Microplex in his home city of Bristol. An independent cinema and performance space, this was notably the set for the film accompanying Bence's 2018 *Kill* EP: a brutal, macabre work reflecting his struggles with addiction. Written two years into his sobriety, *Archangels* combines Gregorian chant, minimal piano and field recordings towards a more complex, ultimately euphoric record.

The show is opened by improvisational group Rastu And Om Shanti. *"The police interview took the form of a guided meditation"* begins spoken word artist Don Mandarin, delaying and pitchshifting his vocals to present a conversation between a murderer and police officer. This set evokes the noirish beauty of Laurie Anderson's *Landfall*, with similar moments of surrealist humour; Mandarin's description of *"foxes in silver spacesuits"* who leave *"silver faeces in the tread of my hippy sandals"* receives a ripple of surprised laughter.

Tara Clerkin follows, performing with a table of electronics at the stage's side. A cinema screen behind her displays looped footage, taken through a car window during a late-night motorway journey. She triggers and manipulates a series of loops, recalling the Lynchian palette of her acid-jazz group Tara Clerkin Trio. Mirroring changing phases of the car's journey, this enthralling performance navigates eery swing, classical guitar, piano glissandos and rolling snares: one particularly interesting drum loop elicits a "Yes!" in the audience.

For Bence's full album performance of *Archangels*, the room is plunged into darkness. An attendant circles the audience with an incense burner, filling the room with a rich smell and faint gauze. We hear the opening of "Psalm 34:4" before the towering, Hagridian figure of Bence – barefoot and wearing a monk's black cassock – walks slowly onstage to address a lone microphone.

A spotlight settles on his wild eyes, framed by long dark hair and a thick beard, as he lends his powerful voice to the recording. Without live instruments or additional musicians, a reworking of *Archangels* is instead played in full through the speakers, elevated by Bence's live vocals.

Bence is a fiercely expressive, electrifying performer. He dances wildly, sticks out his tongue, conducts invisible percussionists, and manually pulls his face into chilling expressions of anguish and ecstasy. The audience hold their applause between tracks, which he bridges with enormous breaths into the microphone.

He embellishes *Archangels* with spoken word pieces. *"Sitting in the audience, in the supermarket"*, Bence drawls over the inquisitive piano of "Tzaphkiel, Archangel Of Binah", *"And not forgetting God for a second"*. A chuckle in the audience signals some attendees are still searching for irony in Bence's embrace of religious imagery. Ultimately, they find none. In service to this sincerely spiritual record, however, Bence's performance instils bewilderment, wonder and fear: feelings we might imagine the sacred music at Bristol Cathedral, a short walk away, once stirred in its mediaeval visitors.

"Raphael, Archangel Of Tiphareth" marks the set's highlight, with Bence's extraordinary voice plunging and soaring over rumbling ambient. The performance culminates in the creaking strings and metallic percussion of album closer "Anu/Enlil/Enki (The Way Of Anu)". *"This is being restored to sanity! This is what it looks like!"*, Bence cackles wildly, scurrying offstage before the track's final moments: a triumphant choral swell, cut by an explosive drum hit. The empty stage receives a standing ovation.

Alastair Shuttleworth

Swordman Kitala

Swordman Kitala + Soft-Bodied Humans
The Rose Hill, Brighton, UK

These are early days yet. Kampalan MC Swordman Kitala has been in the UK less than a week, and he's three shows into an eight date tour. As tonight opens, before the first beat drops, he seems a little nervous addressing a hundred or so amiable Brighton hipsters. "I'm very happy to be here. This is my first time in Europe." London producer Soft-Bodied Humans is stage left, anxious eyes hidden under the shadow of his hood, laptop lid decorated with a loud eye icon. They've been collaborating remotely for a couple of years, releasing the beguiling *Kaiju Kitala* EP in 2022, but hadn't met before this week. That they're here at all feels like a miracle, raising expectations to the point you'd forgive either of them in the moment of a crisis of faith.

It's not just the performers. There's a general aura of timidity for the first 15 or 20 minutes, everyone on their best behaviour. It's apt, Soft-Bodied Humans home territory, gloriously awkward, bathed in garish blasts of vintage Japanese monster film audio and obnoxious drones, mentoring wayward oddballs in joyfully naive dance. As the portentous brass hysteria of "Giringa" lurches its cartoon menace through the room, the crowd sways and gaze at Kitala, lost in his flow. He works the space, pacing, shoulders rolling with the beat as he first crouches then shimmies his way back to full height, eyes barely open, his gaze never straying far from the edge of the stage. As the song ends he's almost still for a second, dazed as he soaks up the response and pronounces his verdict, satisfied, "Niceness".

For the most part Kitala raps in Luganda, the odd bit of English woven in both conspicuously and casually enough so it's not always obvious to European ears which is which. His tone is consistent, the exasperated but charmingly patient preacher confident we'll catch up with him, eventually. Still, the response is restrained through the previously unheard "Magada" and "Seketa" as the music steers first to pop, then cracked brutalist dancehall. It's perhaps telling that when the audience en masse start to catch a vibe it's with another EP track "Ookondoru", whose message is plain and obvious as possible. Soft-Bodied Humans lives up to his name, providing a seductively fluid pulse as fuel for Kitala's instruction, *"move your body, move your body, yahhh!"*. As one the crowd obey. Soft-Bodied Humans, to this point poker-faced, cracks a smile.

From there the show takes off and doesn't let up, the vibe amplified by each unexpected stylistic detour. Most effective is a semi-improvised piece with the working title "Bird", ominous stately stoner techno heavy enough to make a handful of minutes feel like an action packed hour, Kitala dramatically frozen as he roars his punchline, *"It's a MEGATRON!"*. The applause is uninhibited, when the next beat kicks in and dancing resumes with faithful abandon.

The ensuing disco monster "Sea" repays their investment in full, first with buoyant release then in epic groove as Kitala segues from song to hypnotic chant. Rounding out the set with three slices of fractured hiphop-infused heat Kitala moves with newfound confidence. *"Nobody better than I, nobody better than we"*, he sings, and in the moment there's no doubt.

Richard Stacey

Justina Budd

On Site

Exhibitions, installations, etc

Eccentric 80s: Tabea Blumenschein, Hilka Nordhausen, Rabe perplexum And Contemporary Accomplices
Galerie Nord, Berlin, Germany
There's a particular sensibility running through 20th century German culture: eccentricity. In the 1920s short haired, manly dressed eccentric New Women emancipated themselves from traditional family roles, searching for sexual and social freedom. Post-Nazi and postwar era Germany had to wait until another sex revolt in the late 1960s for New Women to re-emerge across various art scenes, producing feminist art whose complexities are only now beginning to be properly recognised. Eccentric 80s is an exhibition devoted to three versatile female polymaths, key in their respective circles, when a generation of punk-inspired artists created new wild sensibilities.

Beginning with her collaborative partnership with film maker Ulrike Ottinger in the late 1970s, Tabea Blumenschein singlehandedly created a distinctive queer look in *The Enchantment Of The Blue Sailors, Madame X: An Absolute Ruler*, *Ticket Of No Return* and more. In these leading roles she freely played with gender through her own costume and make-up designs. Taking as much as she could from constructivist and Bauhaus fashion, she translated these images into lesbian fantasy. Later, in a conscious detournement of her classic blond beauty look, she adapted fashions, paintings and performances, for example, as an occasional member of Die Tödliche Doris, where she merged pop, punk and feminist utopian imagery. But her life became complicated, with many ups and downs, for a while ending up living in a women's shelter in the 1990s. Still, she remained creatively active until her death in 2020, collaborating with younger women artists such as Angela Stiegler, whose 2017 public poster series *We Should All Be Bodys* stands out.

Hilka Nordhausen's story is just as prescient, as it focuses on artist-run spaces that incubated several waves of avant garde art since the 1960s. From 1976–83, Nordhausen ran Buch Handlung Welt (Book Action World) in Hamburg, a space presenting almost daily performance events. It sold books and artworks by day, and served as a social hub for all kinds of local artists and freaks presenting dada-punk poetry readings mixed with feminist performance. Ever self-effacing, Nordhausen's own work became overshadowed by her collaborative efforts. Artist books, manifestos and newspapers were her medium and space for social commentary, as well as the Three Women collective, in which she performed. After she was financially forced to close Buch Handlung Welt, she moved to Berlin, where she died of cancer in 1993.

I was very taken by Rabe perplexum, a Munich based artist born in 1960, who rebelled primarily against what she saw as her Bavarian home's petit-bourgeois conservatism. She conceived herself as not even a queer person, but simply, a 'raven', a personality she took to extremes, designing herself a distinct feathery look with strong black makeup. Fascinated with death, she flirted with goth aesthetics, plotting performances, short films and even early digital animations documenting her interventions into public space, where she got into intense interactions with the public. In her BDSM-filled shows she played with porn and freely used racial stereotypes to criticise German social attitudes, and the latter hasn't aged well. Feverishly looking for artistic comrades, and then unceremoniously ditching them, she primarily created a theatre of self, and her images stare out truculently from the many posters, prints and leaflets scattered around the show. Suffering from mental illness and poverty, Rabe became homeless and committed suicide at the age of 40.

The show is complemented by works by contemporary queer artists, such as Philip Gufler, who created a film of himself wearing a raven suit as a homage to perplexum, but to me, these mostly fell flat. Perhaps that's because the spirits of these three indomitable women fulfilled themselves in action, in their ways of living, their collaborations and their struggles with stubborn social realities. Footnote: the exhibition is now showing at Kunsthaus Hamburg until 21 May.

Agata Pyzik

Exhibition views, *Eccentric 80s: Tabea Blumenschein, Hilka Nordhausen, Rabe perplexum And Contemporary Accomplices* (2022)

Michael Zeeh

The gallery becomes an organ – in both senses of the word – that brings Massimo Bartolini's fusions of composition, sculpture and performance to life.

By Ramona Ponzini

Massimo Bartolini
Hagoromo
Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, Italy

In *Hagoromo*, one of the most popular plays in Japanese Noh theatre, a fisherman finds the feather robe of a celestial maiden descended to Earth. To recover her wings, she performs a dance and then she flies back to heaven. The most comprehensive exhibition ever dedicated to visual artist Massimo Bartolini (born in 1962 in Cecina) takes its cue from this story. The exhibit is curated by Luca Cerizza with Elena Magini for Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato, Italy. *Hagoromo* also gives its title to Bartolini's first mature work, dated 1989, in which dancer Lucia Biondo reacts to the improvised solo of saxophonist Edoardo Marraffa, moving inside a parallelepiped on wheels on top of a small, brightly lit stage. It is evident how some of the recurrent themes of Bartolini's career to date are already anticipated in this work, such as the narrative dimension that develops from sampling, the relationship with the physicality of space, and the entanglement with performative language through sound and music.

The Prato exhibition starts with *The Fruit* (1990). In this video, Biondo again dances while hanging from an Oriental plane tree, and double bassist Luigi Mosso improvises music inspired by the dancer's choreography which he had not seen till that moment. The dissonance between sound and performance prompts us to observe them as individual phenomena, and to grasp a fundamental reference of the artwork: the title pays homage to the *"strange fruit"* sung about by Billie Holiday in 1939, a metaphor for the racist lynchings being perpetrated across the southern states of the US.

Steve Reich, John Cage, Glenn Gould and Gavin Bryars are some of the musician names Bartolini grafts onto his work, disseminating aural references, which in fact, are genuine starting points for his creative process. His way of creating space, volume and sculpture is often inspired by the way such musicians manage time. Steve Reich's rhythmic repetition of patterns and constant overlapping motifs reverberate in the way Bartolini carves his music boxes, and in the repetition of construction modules in his sculptures of scaffolding units. In other cases, the silence between the activation of the mechanisms driving his sculptures, which the public is invited to inhabit as in a landscape, is a clear dedication to Cage's ethos.

For *HUM* (2012), Bartolini commissioned baritone Nicolas Isherwood to dub Glenn Gould's typical murmuring while performing Bach's *Goldberg Variations* as if it were itself a visceral song. Recorded on a vinyl picture disc bearing the image of Jagannath, the Hindu god of the night and sleep, the record reverberates in relation to the colours of the walls of the room where it's installed. The colour orange, which Gould synaesthetically attributed to the note G, predominates here.

Sounds and noises pervade the rooms of Centro Pecci. The ear takes precedence over the eye in perceiving the mechanical process of the coin-counting machine *Untitled (And The Penny Dropped)* (1999–2002). In a process of metamorphosis, turning the machine into a time-measuring device, the work is set to drop 50 lire coins and pennies from the ceiling.

The backbone of the exhibition is *In Là* (2021–22), which consists of an array of aluminium scaffolding pipes suspended above the ground and turned into a pipe organ. For more than 70 metres, 36 pipes span seven of the ten rooms of the museum, its three-octave range ranging from the very lowest C to B natural. Architectural and building elements are turned into a musical instrument, for which composer Gavin Bryars has conceived a polyphonic score, where each melody corresponds to a different room. Wandering around the exhibition space, visitors shape their path in a sonic journey in progress that can never be fully experienced in its entirety.

Installation view, Massimo Bartolini, *Hagoromo* (2022)

"The only vantage point from which one can experience the entire piece would be from a position high above the whole space, or from a flying drone," states Bryars in his notes about the work. This is not dissimilar to the conceptual experiments the he carried out in the early 1970s, designed so that a listener could never experience the totality of a work.

The installation also plays a fundamental role in creating a loop designed as an interpretative route through the exhibition. The organ pipe scaffolding divides each exhibition gallery in half, generating four possible circular paths for visitors, who can enter from either of two opposite doors. The title of this major installation alludes to the dominant key of the piece (La can be translated as the musical note A), whose score is always beyond (là, written with an accent, means there), always out of reach, never experienced in its entirety just like the formal structure of the organ itself.

A few of the endless possibilities of listening to such a work are captured by the accompanying record *In Là*, released by Alga Marghen. Here the aural walk of the spectator is recorded entering from the right side of the space, from gallery one to nine and backwards, and then from the opposite side's gallery nine to one, back to the starting point.

The transformation of sound into matter and vibration into form permeates Bartolini's entire oeuvre. As an artist, he's not new to creating organs from scaffolding. These are not only musical instruments but also monumental installations, where the performative action is the mechanical movement of a "brain" that pushes air into the pipes through a mechanism like that of a music box. These works are clearly inspired by the Baroque organ – the most visual of musical instruments capable of making the intangibility of music perceptible. ○

Ela Bialkowska/OKNO Studio. Courtesy Massimo Bartolini/Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci

Installation View, *Not Necessarily In The Right Order* (2023)

Not Necessarily In The Right Order
Greenwich University Stephen Lawrence Gallery, London, UK

Looking through the big windows facing onto Stockwell Street from the outside, it looks like something under construction – or in the process of being dismantled. A tangle of oil cans and rusted grill pans hangs from a tatty bit of old rope above a scattering of screws and bottle caps sprayed across the floor; things strewn about here and there; a ladder, seemingly abandoned. But on the inside, the whole room is alive. Deep bass throbs pound out from a pair of big Genelec subs in opposing corners; an array of seven suspended speaker cones, seemingly ripped from car stereos and old hi-fis, all crackling and crunching like very angry Rice Krispies; a megaphone slung from the rafters going po-po-po-po-po-pock. Everything is still, but it bears the trace of human activity – like a crime scene, or the site of some dreadful accident.

Just over a week ago, the sounds I'm hearing now were being made live by Dirty Electronics (aka John Richards) and Dushume (Amit D Patel) before a modest crowd perched nervously around the edges of the room as if they were worried they might get hit by something and inadvertently become part of the show (one or two came close). The pair stalked the room like two rather shy prize fighters, the latter sending white noise screaming from his phone to points all over the room and occasionally crashing into the grill pan mobile, sending them clanging; the former tweaking a miniature army of little circuits or delicately placing tiny motors buzzing and bashing around inside a tin can.

Jet black ink ran from two hospital drips down a roll of paper attached to another woofer, setting it shaking as it fell, producing something like a Robert Motherwell – if Motherwell had just drunk a small vat of taurine based energy drinks. The sounds from the performance were recorded. Now, in the absence of the performers, those sounds continue to haunt the room they were made in like so many unquiet spirits.

Not Necessarily In The Right Order is an exhibition crammed with ghosts. Carol Wyss and Dominic Murcott's *Skizzen* feeds images of old bones through a player piano roll. As the spool turns, Wyss's images make a macabre animated accompaniment to Murcott's Nancarrow-esque pianola trills. The pair later collaborated on another work, *Head Piece* (also included here), which places the viewer inside someone else's skull. You find yourself surrounded by five large prints of the cranial interior, shot in rich black and white with long, dramatic shadows, as if to resemble cave landscapes. To accompany this, Murcott has produced a score made entirely by rubbing, scratching and tapping on real human bones, sounds which worry away as you look around like thoughts trying desperately to escape.

But the show as a whole is far from austere. The title, after all, comes from an old Morecambe & Wise TV comedy sketch. "You're playing all the wrong notes!" guest star André Previn screamed at Eric Morecambe after a skylarking performance of Grieg's piano concerto. "I'm playing all the right notes," Morecambe insisted, "but not necessarily in the right order." To match this comical spirit, curator David Waterworth has arranged the works so they all interrupt and intrude on each other, creating an overall cacophony of electronics and piano sounds and bone scraping noises, all battling for airspace in a wild aleatoric symphony.

Few works exemplify this spirit better than Graeme Miller's simultaneously haunting and hair-brained *Cat Print*. 30 years ago, Miller's beloved pet Mr Squidgett took a walk across the keyboard of a Yamaha Clavinova and – intentionally or not – composed his first sonata. Fortunately, the floppy disk inside the piano recorded the cat's performance for posterity, much as piano rolls once preserved the playing of Rachmaninov or Busoni. Now, long after the cat's death, the piano still plays, its worn and smudged keys following Mr Squidgett's every nuance, moving seemingly of their own accord, as if possessed by some capricious avant gardist spook. Utilising the full range of the keyboard, interspersing wild, atonal flurries of notes with long, gaping silences, it could almost be the work of some feline Ferneyhough. The notes are all there – just not quite in the right order.

Robert Barry

Emma Margetson

TERRAFORMA

9, 10, 11 June '23
Villa Arconati - FAR

Actress
Aho Ssan
Batu
Beatrice Dillon & Kuljit Bhamra
Dawuna
Dennis Bovell
Donato Dozzy b2b Marco Shuttle
Exotic Sin feat. TYSON
Hudson Mohawke
Josey Rebelle
Lolina & Dr. Pit
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Our winter 2022/23 schedule includes over one hundred and twenty regular series by Aka_Siro_DJ, Chiara Ambrosio, Artrocker, Band of Holy Joy, deXter Bentley, DJ BPM, Cafe OTO, Oliver Carter-Wakefield, Joe Cushley, William English, Paul Fisher, framework, Debbie Golt, Andrew Graves-Johnston, Gwaith Sŵn, Kevin Sheils, Orlando Harrison, Iklectik, Club Integral, Into The Moss, Intoxica, Ivor Kallin, Hannah Kemp-Welch, The Lallas, Langham Research Centre, Franziska Lantz, Mundele Mafuta, Jude Montague, MSCTY, Marina Organ, Out To Lunch, MW, Patricia Pascal, Philippe Petit, Ed Pinsent, Flora Pitrolo, Polifony, Radia, The Relatives, DJ Ritu, Robin The Fog, Miguel Santos, Johnny Seven, SHAPE, Bob & Roberta Smith, Sonic Imperfections, Spizz, Steep Incline, Synaptic Island, Benjamin Tassie, Art Terry, Ben Thompson, Gianluca Tramontana, Simon Tyszko, The Wire, :zoviet*france: and many more.
To keep in touch with all our news, join our mailing list today.
resonance.fm

Resonance EXTRA

Available on DAB digital radio in Brighton & Hove, Cambridge, London and Norwich. Retune your radio now!

Sound art, radio art and global music from 100 contributing artists including Agnès Pe, Artyom Kryptogen, Bobby Jewell, Dylan Dekay-Bemis, Dylan Nyoukis, f.ampism, female:pressure, First Light Records, Gonçalo F Cardoso (Discrepant), Hagai Izenberg, John Moses, Jonathan Frigeri (Radio Picnic), ju ca, Kate Carr, Louis Sterling, Lucia Udvardyova, Martin Eccles, Mat Eric Hart, Matti Gajek, Mitamine Lab, Naoko Itami, Naviar Records, Neil Luck, Nicola Serra (Dronica), Paul Nataraj, Resistance Through Ritual, SHAPE, Shimmering Moods Records, Simon Coates (Tse Tse Fly Middle East), Sine Büyüka (Injazero), Stephane Marin (PhonoGraphic Mornings), Theo Sayers (Old Dreams for a New Age), The Spirit of Gravity, Trash Panda QC, Unexplained Sounds Group, The Wire Magazine & many more.

Imminent on **Resonance EXTRA**: musician Kayla Painter starts a new series, Connections to Sound. Originally broadcasting on Worldwide FM, Kayla Painter explores our innate connection to sound through the world around us, playing music across the spectrum focusing on electronic, experimental, and downtempo.

extra.resonance.fm

Reveil - in its epochal tenth year!

5AM London time (UTC+1) on Saturday 6 May - 6AM on Sunday 7 May 2023

Resonance EXTRA broadcasts Reveil, a 24+1 hour live collaborative broadcast made up of ephemeral streams from rural and urban places – birds, amphibians, weather and sounds of unknown origin – from locations around the world. Each streamer transmits their sounds live as daybreak arrives, moving west across the Earth from one open microphone to the next.

Registered charity 290236
(London Musician's Collective Ltd)
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and individual donors

WIRE
thewire.co.uk

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

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39th edition

15 to 21 may 2023

A WEEK OF CONCERTS
SOUND ART INSTALLATIONS
IN PUBLIC SPACES
FILMS AND VISUAL ARTS

CONCERTS FROM THURSDAY,
MAY 18 TO SUNDAY, MAY 21

POIL UEDA

IKUE MORI
« Tracing the Magic »

ZOH AMBA
« Bhakti »

LORI FREEDMAN
« BeingFive »

EMILIE ŠKRIJELJ
TOM MALMENDIER
« Les Marquises »

CAMILLE BRISSON
ISABELLE CLERMONT
« Collectif Tendancielle »

JOE SORBARA
MATTHIAS MAINZ
« Aurealities »

FRED FRITH TRIO

HEIKE LISS
SUSANA SANTOS SILVA
« Drawing Sound »

SIMON HANES
« GNR8RZ »

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GUY THOUIN
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TASHI DORJI / DAVE REMPIS

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COLIN STETSON
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MAY 5-7, 2023

BANG ON A CAN'S SUPERCHARGED MUSICAL RIDE THROUGH RIGHT NOW

FRIDAY, MAY 5 – SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2023

LONG PLAY

50+ CONCERTS THROUGHOUT BROOKLYN

FESTIVAL PASSES AT LONGPLAYFESTIVAL.ORG

THE CENTER FOR FICTION - PIONEER WORKS - ROULETTE - BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC - PUBLIC RECORDS - LITTLEFIELD - BRIC - MARK MORRIS DANCE CENTER

FRIDAY, MAY 5TH

MEMORY GAME
PERFORMED BY
MEREDITH MONK & VOCAL ENSEMBLE
WITH BANG ON A CAN ALL-STARS

SATURDAY, MAY 6TH

PHILIP GLASS ENSEMBLE PERFORMS *GLASSWORKS*
MOUNT EERIE
GANAVYA + SHABAKA HUTCHINGS
MICHAEL GORDON'S *FIELD OF VISION*
PERFORMED BY UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE
LED BY DOUG PERKINS
DAVID LANG'S *LOVE FAIL* PERFORMED BY QUINCE ENSEMBLE
75 DOLLAR BILL LITTLE BIG BAND
TYSHAWN SOREY'S *FOR GEORGE LEWIS*
PERFORMED BY ALARM WILL SOUND
JACK QUARTET
PLAYS CATHERINE LAMB, CHRISTOPHER OTTO, IANNIS XENAKIS
DAVE LIEBMAN + KENNY WERNER
DAVID SANFORD BIG BAND FEATURING HUGH RAGIN
EXO-TECH
GREG DAVIS
HARRIET TUBMAN
IVA BITTOVÁ
JAMES BRANDON LEWIS + CHAD TAYLOR DUO
JESSICA MOSS
JOSEPH BRANCIFORTE + TAYLOR DEUPREE
LITURGY
MOMENTA QUARTET
PLAYS ALVIN SINGLETON
MORTON SUBOTNICK
PERFORMS *SILVER APPLES OF THE MOON*
BRANDON LOPEZ AND FRED MOTEN DUO
NATHALIE JOACHIM, VÂN-ÁNH VÕ + SŌ PERCUSSION
NU JAZZ
SCARCITY
TAKE OFF COLLECTIVE
THUMBSCREW (MARY HALVORSON, MICHAEL FORMANEK, TOMAS FUJIWARA)
TYONDAI BRAXTON/JEFRE CANTU LEDESMA/BEN VIDA
ŽIBUOKLĖ MARTINAITYTĖ'S *HADAL ZONE* (US PREMIERE)
PERFORMED BY SYNAESTHESIS ENSEMBLE

SUNDAY, MAY 7TH

THE ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO
DAWN RICHARD + SPENCER ZAHN: *PIGMENTS*
CAROLINE SHAW + SŌ PERCUSSION
MORTON FELDMAN'S *TRIADIC MEMORIES* PERFORMED BY
CONRAD TAO AND TYSHAWN SOREY
VERY VERY CIRCUS: THE MUSIC OF HENRY THREADGILL
DAVID MURRAY + MARTA SANCHEZ
ADAM O'FARRILL'S STRANGER DAYS
YARN / WIRE PLAYS ANNEA LOCKWOOD
ANIMAL BY ASH FURE
BIG DOG LITTLE DOG
ELIANA GLASS
GYAN RILEY + KRISHNA BHATT
IAN CHANG
JUNE MCDOOM
KALBELLS
LORI GOLDSTON
NAILAH HUNTER
PATRICIA BRENNAN QUARTET
SUSIE IBARRA + ALEX PEH
THE HANDS FREE
TIME WHARP
JULIA WOLFE'S *MY LIPS FROM SPEAKING*

BABA YAGA'S HUT C/S PRESENTS

HANS-JOACHIM ROEDELIUS

+ CHRISTOPHER CHAPLIN & TIM STORY

RESIDENCY 27-29 JULY 2023

CAFE OTO

18-22 Ashwin St, E8 3DL

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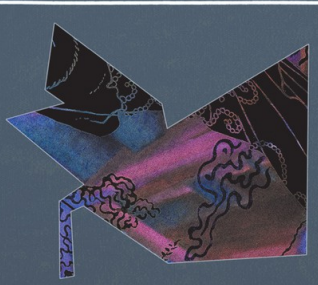
28 JUL 2023	ROEDELIUS & CHAPLIN ROEDELIUS & STORY PLAY "4 HANDS"	£26
29 JUL 2023	ROEDELIUS/CHAPLIN/STORY FIRST STEP TO "WALLE WALLE" (MORE OHR LESS 2023 - 20TH EDITION)	£26

dice.fm DICE £65 combined ticket 8PM

BABA YAGA'S HUT C/S PRESENTS



RAFAEL ANTON IRISARRI

POLE

BEA BRENNAN

20 MAY 2023 EartH 11-17 Stoke Newington Rd, N16 8BH 6PM

£25 (incl. fees) dice.fm DICE

BABA YAGA'S HUT PRESENTS

16TH APRIL - MOOR BEER VAULTS
EVICSHEN
NEO GEODESIA
FC MALINA

18TH APRIL - THE SOCIAL
COLOSSAL SQUID
CASSELS
SOLD OUT

20TH APRIL - SEBRIGHT ARMS
JAAW
STREET GREASE

27TH APRIL - CAFE OTO
SHIT & SHINE
SOLAR CORONA
ELEKTRISCHE MASCHINE

28TH APRIL - CAFE OTO
SHIT & SHINE
LIA MICE
DRUMM CHIMP

28TH APRIL - UNION CHAPEL
COLIN STETSON
FATEN KANAAN

29TH APRIL - THE GARAGE
A CERTAIN RATIO
WERKHA

4TH MAY - NEW RIVER STUDIOS
GUM TAKES TOOTH
MICROCORPS
A'BEAR

13TH MAY - IKLECTIK
WARRINGTON-RUNCORN NEW TOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN (MATINEE AND EVE)
SOLD OUT

18TH MAY - CORSICA STUDIOS
PUCE MARY
NORDRA

20TH MAY - EARTH
RAFAEL ANTON IRISARRI
POLE
BEA BRENNAN

23RD MAY - TIN TABERNACLE
MIKE GANGLOFF
C JOYNES
JACKEN ELSWYTH

25TH MAY - PECKHAM AUDIO
BABY MOROCCO

27TH MAY - BARBICAN HALL
RIVAL CONSOLES
HAINBACH SOLD OUT

28TH MAY - LEXINGTON
DRAHLA

29TH MAY - CAFE OTO
MARTA SALOGNI
& TOM RELLEEN'S MUSIC FOR OPEN SPACES

1ST JUNE - MOOR BEER VAULTS
SLY & THE FAMILY DRONE
PSYCHIC GRAVEYARD

2ND JUNE - RICH MIX
PERE UBU
VÄLVE

3RD JUNE - MOTH CLUB
PRAM
CHOPCHOP

10TH JUN - COURTYARD THEATRE
FENELLA (JANE WEAVER)

18TH JUN - CECIL SHARP HOUSE
SHOVEL DANCE COLLECTIVE
LONDON SACRED HARP
DAWN TERRY

22ND JUN - BAR DOÑA
LARA JONES
SAM BARTON
MAXIE

23RD JUNE - THE LEXINGTON
COLOSSAL SQUID

27TH - 29TH JUL - CAFE OTO
HANS-JOACHIM ROEDELIUS RESIDENCY

12TH AUG - BUSH HALL
J.G THIRLWELL ENSEMBLE

22ND AUG - HERE AT OUTERNET
CLIPPING.

29TH & 30TH AUG- CAFE OTO
MC YALLAH
DEBMASTER

31ST AUG - STUDIO 9294
HORSE LORDS
DELILUH

14TH SEPT - ST JOHN ON BETHNAL GREEN
MICK HARVEY
JP SHILO
SOMETIMES WITH OTHERS

15TH SEPT - ST JOHN ON BETHNAL GREEN
EX-EASTER ISLAND HEAD
AIDAN BAKER

15TH SEPT - CAFE OTO
KATIE GATELY
RAINBOW ISLAND

22ND SEPT - STUDIO 9294
ESBEN AND THE WITCH

24TH SEPT - MOTH CLUB
HALF JAPANESE

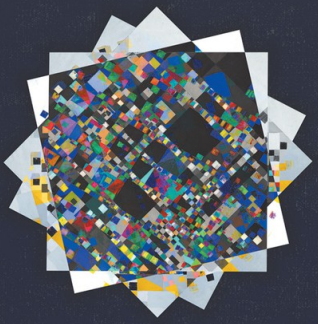
30TH SEPT - THE GARAGE
HEY COLOSSUS (ALL DAYER)

3RD OCT - VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
HALINA RICE

dice.fm DICE BABA YAGA'S HUT C/S

BABA YAGA'S HUT C/S PRESENTS

BABA YAGA'S HUT PRESENTS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH RUNWAY



A CERTAIN RATIO

WERKHA

29 APR 2023 THE GARAGE 20-22 Highbury Corner, N5 1RD 7.30

£28 (incl. fees) dice.fm DICE

REVEIL 3–4.05 2014

6–7.05 2023 REVEIL

REVEIL travels west on live audio feeds from streamers around the world at daybreak, making a full loop over one earth day.

5am London time (UTC+1) on Saturday 6th May to 6am on Sunday 7th May 2023

Tune in:
soundtent.org/reveil

Southwark Council
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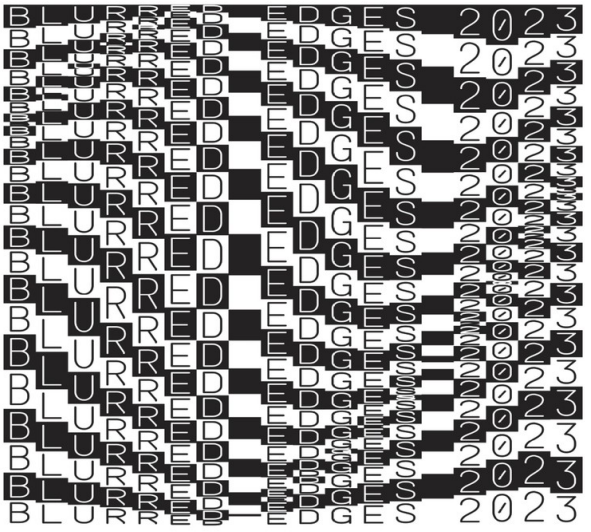

Festival of Experimental Music Hamburg

analogue as well as electronic sounds in field recordings, compositions, improvisations, performances, videos, sound installations and exhibitions

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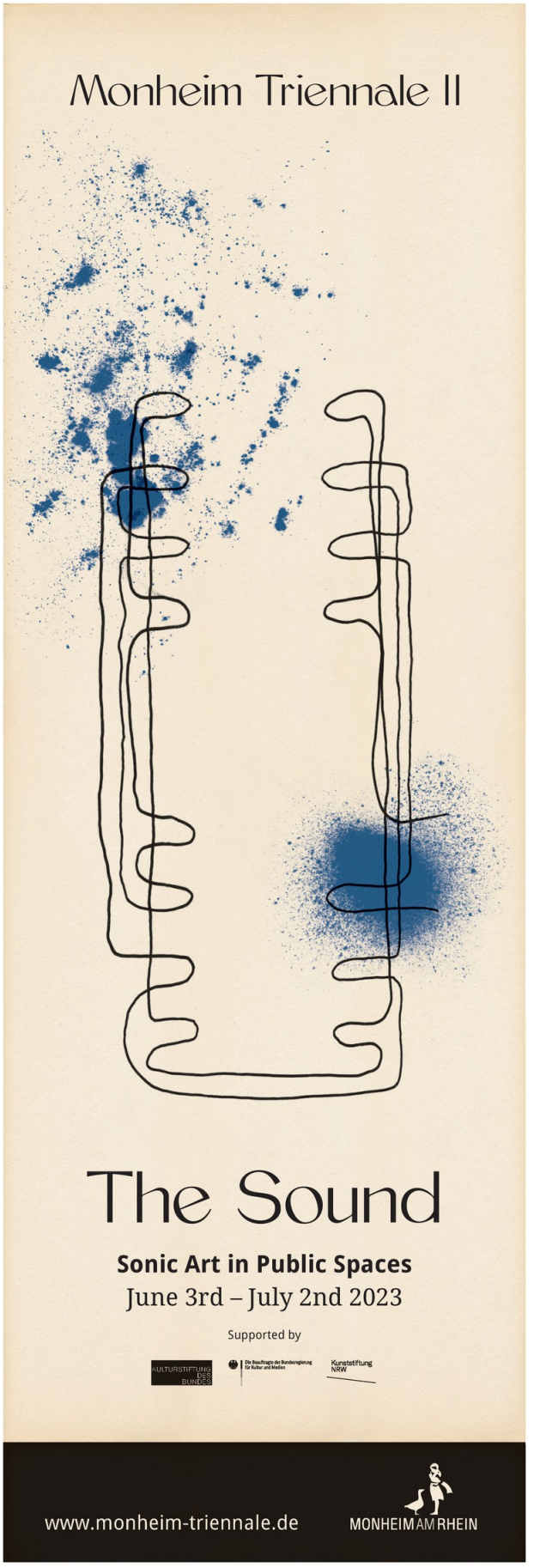

the engine room

24 April - 18 May
Morley Gallery
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For more information visit www.engineroomlondon.org

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Kunst, Verein, wagen, Halle

OPEN CALL 2023

MICROTONAL MUSIC STUDIOS
ARTISTIC AND MUSICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

Open Call for participants in the study program between September 2023 and May 2024.
The project focuses on re-imagining musical aesthetics as well as musical practices through a lens of relational art, performance studies, and institutional critique.

Send your motivation letter, CV and portfolio to:
micro-tonalmusicstudios@gmail.com
Deadline : 31.5.2023
Results will be given by June 30th 2023
Detailed info:
http://microtonalmusicstudios.com/open-call-2023/

COBALT

SUMMER 2023 / SUMMER 2023 / SUMMER 2023 / SUMMER 2023 / SUMMER 2023 / SUMMER 2023 / 2023 / SUMMER 2023 /SUMMER 2023 / SUMMER 2023

MAY 11	t l k & boci
MAY 12	NEUE GRAFIK ENSEMBLE & VIPERTIME
MAY 25	HARU NEMURI
MAY 26	CHEWY SHE'S MOTH POPERA
JUN 01	PRAM & BRAD FIELD

COBALTSTUDIOS.CO.UK SUMMER SEASON 2023 →

LOUDSPEAKER ORCHESTRA CONCERT SERIES 22/23

22 September 2022, 7.30pm
Dynamical Systems and Natural Environments
with nonclassical
St John's Waterloo

26 October 2022, 7pm
Reconfiguring the Landscape
with NMH Oslo and IRCAM
Greenwich Market

18-20 November 2022
SOUND/IMAGE 22
International Festival
University of Greenwich

14 December 2022, 7pm
Volstarfel
The Amersham Arms

25 January 2023, 7pm
Centre for Research in New Music
University of Huddersfield
St Alfege Church

25 February 2023, 7pm
Interrogating the Noise: Gallery Sound
Stephen Lawrence Gallery

17 March 2023, 6pm
Climate Words
Trinity Laban Conservatoire
Blackheath Halls

17 May 2023, 7pm
Resonant Chamber
with Aproxima Arts
Brunel Museum

21 June 2023, 7pm
Sonic Habitats
with Touch
Crossrail Place Roof Garden

15 July 2023, 7.30pm
Disruptive Frequencies
with nonclassical
Kings Place

loudspeakerorchestra.org

nonclassical Touch.

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galerie d'art sonore

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NYOKABI KARIÛKI
PAULA GARCIA

3 - 13 mayo, 2023
Martes a sábado, 11 - 19 h
Doctor Fourquet 10, Madrid

www.leson7.com

Brighton Festival

Brighton Festival Music
With Guest Director Nabihah Iqbal

Aba Shanti-I
+ Dennis Bovell MBE
+ Nabihah Iqbal
Sun 7 May | Concorde 2

All Sounds at All Saints
with Shabaka Hutchings, Lucinda Chua & more
Tue 9–Fri 12 May
All Saints Church

SUROOR
Nabihah Iqbal, Raheel Khan, Paul Purgas & Imran Perretta
Mon 15 May | Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts

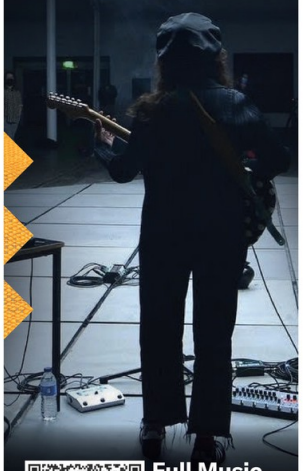
Sarathy Korwar + Karma Sheen
Tue 16 May | Concorde 2

Findom + Lunch Money Life + Handle
Sat 20 May | The Old Market

Different Folks
with Eliza & Martin Carthy, Shirley Collins & more
Sat 20 & Sun 21 May
Brighton Dome Concert Hall

Evadney + visual artist Infinite Vibes
Thu 25 May | Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts

Celestial Voices: BISHI + Trans Voices
Fri 26 May | The Old Market



Full Music Programme
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MAY 11 - MAY 14 2023
OPENING: THURSDAY MAY 11 18.00 - 21.00

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Out There

UK festivals

Between The Lines
Serious presents its annual showcase of leftfield artists featuring Lafawndah, Pan Daijing, John Bence, Nabihah Iqbal's *Dreamer* album launch, Infinity Knives x Brian Ennels, Elaine Howley, and Acid Granny. London ICA, 13 & 20–21 May, £65–£17.50, ica.art

Brighton Festival
Music highlights of this annual south coast arts festival include: A Certain Ratio + Holy Tongue (6 May), Aba Shanti-I + Dennis Bovell + Nabinah Iqbal (7 May), Shabaka Hutchings + Otto Hashimi (9), Linton Kwesi Johnson & Nabihah Iqbal (14), Anoushka Shankar (14), Sarathy Korwar + Karma Sheen (16), Kassem Mosse + Flora Yin Wong (19), Eliza & Martin Carthy & Guests (20), matinee: Shirley Collins & The Lodestar Band (21, 3pm), Goldie + Submotive + Riz La Teef (28, 11pm), Hot 8 Brass Band (5 June). Brighton various venues, times & prices, brightonfestival.org

NTS: One Day
Outdoor festival organised by the streaming radio station. The bill features Aba Shanti-I, Dry Cleaning, JPEGMAFIA, Crystallmess, Theo Parrish and more. London Burgess Park, 27 May, £60.50, nts.live

Schwet X
The Noods Radio and Avon Terror Corps affiliated promoter celebrates ten years of events with an 11 hour, two room all-dayer with The Ephemeron Loop, Dame Area, Franco Franco, Prangers, Ex-Agent, DJ Vladimir Ivkovic and more (Strange Brew, 6 May, 5pm–4am), plus Resident DJs (Mickey Zoggs, 4 May), and an experimental Freakjam led by Dan Johnson (Strange Brew, 5). Bristol various venues, 4–6 May, various times & prices, headfirstbristol.co.uk

Two Ship
Improvised music mini-fest on the South East coast organised by double bass player Olie Brice. Featuring John Edwards, Jason Yarde, Hannah Marshall, Tobias Delius, Tullis Rennie, Mark Sanders, Cath Roberts, Veryan Weston, Faye MacCalman, Trevor Watts, Otto Willberg and Jamie Harris. Hastings The Old Town Hall, 19 May at 7pm, 20 May at 2pm & 7pm, £15–£7, eventbrite.co.uk

Wide Awake
One day festival in a London park featuring Oneohtrix Point Never, Osees, Arooj Aftab, Gilla Band, Naima Bock and more. London Brockwell Park, 27 May, 11:30am, £50, wideawakelondon.co.uk

International festivals

Angelica Italy
Bologna's adventurous music festival celebrates its 33rd year with Eiko Ishibashi & Jim O'Rourke, Sofia Jernberg & Alexander Hawkins's *Musho*, Wadada Leo Smith with his Purple Kikuyu sextet and Italian Istantanea string quartet, Oren Ambarchi's Carpe Diem, Thomas Ankersmit's Serge 50, Maja SK Ratkje & Stian Westerhus, Sarah Davachi, Andrea Belfi & Hilary Jeffery, Otomo Yoshihide solo turntables and his new Something Sweet Something Tender Orchestra. Bologna Teatro San Leonardo and Basilica Di Santa Maria Dei Servi, 2–31 May, €20–€10, aaa-angelica.com

Donaufestival Austria
Two weekends of new music, installations and talks. First artists announced include Debby Friday, Puce Mary, Phew, Marina Herlop, Félicia Atkinson, Arooj Aftab with Vijay Iyer & Shahzad Ismaily, Klara Lewis & Nik Colk Void, Godflesh, Big | Brave, Moin, James Holden, Hüma Utku, DJ Lag and Rojin Sharafi. Krems an der Donau various venues, 28–30 April & 5–7 May, early bird tickets €78–€60, donaufestival.at

Fiber Netherlands
Festival combining electronic music, digital arts, symposium and exhibition. With live music from Puce Mary and others. Amsterdam various venues, 11–14 May, fiberfestival.nl

FIMAV Canada
The Festival Musique Actuelle Victoriaville presents a week of concerts, sound art installations in public places, films and visual art. With John Zorn Music For Trios and New Masada Quartet, Ikue Mori's *Tracing The Magic*, Fred Frith/Heike Liss/Susana Santos Silva, Buñuel, Fujita & Eye, PoiL Ueda, Void Patrol, Tashi Dorji & Dave Rempis, François Houle/Kate Gentile/Alexander Hawkins, Lori Freedman, Zoh Amba and more. Victoriaville various venues, 15–21 May, fimav.qc.ca

Long Play US
Bang On A Can's annual extravaganza comprises over 50 concerts in Brooklyn venues over three days, including Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Meredith Monk & BOAC Memory Game, Tyshawn Sorey, Philip Glass

Wire supported events

Cafe Oto UK
Events at North East London's venue for experimental music include: Laetitia Sadier/Marie Merlet/Blanca Regina/Pierre Bouvier Patron + Sharon Gal/Lucie Stepankova/Greta Pistaceci (3 May), Loren Connors & Alan Licht (5–6), Michiko Ogawa (7), Marc Ribot (8–9), Saviet & Houston play Catherine Lamb (11), Gavin Bryars (15–16), Darin Gray/Pak Yan Lau/Alan Wilkinson/Steve Noble (17), Harutaka Mochizuki (18), Maya Dunietz/Tim Hodgkinson/Chris Cutler (21), Otomo Yoshihide & friends (22), Acoustic Commons (23), Keiji Haino residency (24, 25 & 27), Brother May (26), Come (28), Marta Salogni & Tom Relleen (29). London Cafe Oto, various times & prices, cafeoto.co.uk

Iklectik UK
Events at the South London performance space include: Jon Wozencroft + Mark Van Hoen (3 May), Pytko + Tullis Rennie (5), Drew McDowall + Monika Subrtova (6), Paul Cousins (9), Gina Birch + Anat Ben-David + Kamura Obscura (10), Tim Parkinson & GBSR (11), Ervin Omsk + Shoeg + Neo Geodesia (12), Cyborg Soloists (18), The Strobe Light Network + buny + Dina Silanteva (19), Maya Dunietz & Grundik Kasyansky + Angharad Davies (22), Immersive Audio workshop (28). London Iklectik, various times and prices, iklectikartlab.com

Still from live visuals by Dina Silanteva

Kiezsalon Germany
Roaming Berlin event with bass player Mike Majkowski, vibes and percussion player Els Vandeweyer, violinist Luca Kézdy, and composers Chris Newman & Luciano Chessa. Berlin Collegium Hungaricum, 13 May, 7pm, €22.58, digitalinberlin.de

Courtesy Dina Silanteva

Ensemble, 75 Dollar Bill, Gyan Riley, Adam O'Farrill, Greg Davis, David Liebman, Taylor Deupree, Lori Goldston, Ben Vida, Morton Subotnick, Shabaka Hutchings, Harriet Tubman, Alarm Will Sound, Iva Bittova, James Brandon Lewis & Chad Taylor, Thumbscrew, Caroline Shaw, Henry Threadgill, Yarn/Wire plays Annea Lockwood, Susie Ibarra & Alex Peh and many more. New York various venues, 5–7 May, $300–$200, bangonacan.org

Magnet Germany
International festival of eclectic music with new project groupings, artists' talks, and a club night. Featuring Peter Evans & Luke Stewart, Zoh Amba Trio, Ruth Goller's Skylla, Astrid Sonne, Dorian Concept, Evi Filippou group, Elvin Brandhi & Ludwig Wandinger, Farida Amadou, Luis Vicente Quartet and Still House Plants. Wiesbaden Kulturpark Schlachthof, 12–14 May, €65–€10, magnetfestival.de

Moers Germany
Long-running experimental music festival with over 250 artists from 23 countries. With a focus on György Ligeti and performances by Mark Ernestus's Ndagga Rhythm Force, Selvhenter featuring Marilyn Mazur, Eve Risser's Red Desert Orchestra, Gavin Bryars Ensemble, Seabrook Trio, eddy kwon, Pharmakon, Elvin Brandhi, Kenny Garrett & Sounds From The Ancestors, Wendy Eisenberg's Editrix, Ganelin Trio, Joel Grip and Lukas Ligeti's Burkina Electric. Moers various venues, 26–29 May, €285–€195, moers-festival.de

Papiripar Germany
Experimental music, art, film and performance festival returns – this time for an in-person event rather than one focused around a radio station. With Victoria Shen & Ivana Dama, Mazen Kerbaj, Companion Species (Jennifer Walshe & Thomas Lehn), Nihiloxica and more. Hamburg various venues, 18–21 May, papiripar.com

SPOR Denmark
Contemporary music and sound art festival with exhibitions, solo operas, choral works, multimedia and audiovisual performances including Ensemble Musikfabrik, Scenatet, Goodiepal & Bananskolen, Anna Katrin Egilstrøð's *From Harbour To Harbour*, and many more. Aarhus various venues, 10–14 May, various times and prices, sporfestival.dk

Special events

Ensemble Dedalus: ErikM + Brian Eno + Éliane Radigue France
Free launch concert for three CDs by the contemporary chamber ensemble. Aubervilliers Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, 20 May, free, gmea.net

Tribute To Harry Smith's Anthology Of American Folk Music Belgium
Concerts, film screening and a talk celebrating the 100th birthday of the late anthropologist and experimental film maker and his seminal collection of early American roots music recordings. Brussels AB, 27–29 May, various times and prices, abconcerts.be

Online & hybrid events

Reveil Online
24 hours of streaming live feeds of the sounds of daybreak as dawn moves around the world. Online, 6 May, 5am GMT, free, soundtent.org

Roulette US/Online
In-person and sometimes live-streamed concerts at New York's long-running experimental music space: DeForrest Brown Jr's *Bombingham* (10 May), Zeena Parkins & Laetitia Sonami (17), Eddy Kwon's *Sun Han* (19) and Brandon Lopez (30). Online & New York Roulette, various times and prices, roulette.org

Exhibitions & installations

Richard Bolhuis: Visceral UK
A new selection of Polaroids and an audiovisual installation. London Hundred Years Gallery, 11–14 May, free, hundredyearsgallery.co.uk

Moki Cherry: Here And Now UK
Over 30 works and archival materials celebrating the Swedish artist's practice across textiles, sculpture, painting, drawing, writing, collage and video. Includes work made in collaboration with her partner Don Cherry and their Organic Music project. London ICA, 31 May–27 August, ica.art

Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency US
The free jazz percussionist, artist, gardener, botanist and herbalist celebrated through performance films, sculptural assemblages, works on paper, costumes and decorated percussion. Los Angeles ICA, until 14 May, theicala.org

Le Son 7 Spain
Travelling sound art gallery rocks up in Madrid with pieces by Alan Courtis, Bernie Krause, Matthew Herbert, Beatriz Ferreyra, Nyokabi Kariũki, François K, Fari Bradley and others. Madrid Doctor Fourquet 10, 3–13 May, Tues–Sat, 11am–7pm, free, leson7.com

Punk: Rage & Revolution UK
The story of punk told from a local and national perspective. Includes the first retrospective of original Vivienne Westwood clothing. Co-curated by local youth. Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, 27 May–3 September, rageandrevolution.co.uk

UK club nights

Moovin In
Reggae, dub, jungle and drum 'n' bass night with David Rodigan, Congo Natty, Mad Professor, General Levy, Dillinja and more. Manchester Victoria Warehouse, 5 May, 9pm–4am, £TBA, facebook.com

UK & Ireland on stage

Big|Brave
Heavy trio from Montreal with a new album *Nature Morte* out on Thrill Jockey: London Desertfest (7 May), Manchester Soup (9), Glasgow Stereo (10), Newcastle upon Tyne The Lubber Fiend (11), Liverpool The Invisible Wind Factory (12), Norwich Voodoo Daddy's (13), Birmingham The Castle & Falcon (14), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (15), Bristol Dareshack (16) and Brighton The Hope And Ruin (17). thrilljockey.com

Curious Ear
Manchester monthly improv nights with Dominic Lash & David Birchall + Kate Armitage & Dave Jackson + James Coote & Andrew Rothwell. Manchester Peer Hat, 15 May, £8–£5. curiousear.net

Dareshack
Bristol black box venue: Biped workshop (30 April–1 May), Jérôme Noetinger + Howlround (3 May), Sarahsson talk (9), Big Brave (16), M(h)aol (17) and Big Lad (26). Bristol Dareshack, various times & prices. dareshack.com

Paul Dunmall 70th Birthday Celebrations
Free music saxophone player performs in three ensembles with local players (Birmingham Symphony Hall, 7 May) and in two shows with a quartet and an octet which include Evan Parker, John Edwards, Mark Sanders, Neil Metcalfe and Simon Picard (London Vortex, 13 May, 7pm & 9pm). vortexjazz.co.uk

ESG
South Bronx funk outfit on tour: London The Jazz Cafe (12 May), Manchester Band On The Wall (13) and Leeds Brudenell Social Club (14). esgtheband.wixsite.com

Debby Friday
Industrial dancefloor songs from the Nigerian born, Canada based musician and film maker, with a new album and short film *Good Luck* out on Sub Pop. Grove co-headlines on the London date: Bristol The Crofters Rights (2 May), London Corsica Studios (3) and Salford The White Hotel (12). debbyfriday.com

House Of All
Five former members of The Fall – Martin Bramah, Steve Hanley, Paul Hanley, Simon Wolstencroft and Pete Greenway – tour their eponymous debut album: London The Garage (18 May), Salford The White Hotel (19), Wolverhampton Newhampton Arts Centre (20), Newcastle upon Tyne The Cluny (22), Edinburgh Summerhall (23) and Salford The White Hotel (25). linktr.ee

Rafael Anton Irisarri + Pole + Bea Brennan
Minimal electronics from Irisarri, minimal dub from Pole, and ambient soundscapes from Brennan. London Earth, 20 May, 6pm, £25, earthackney.co.uk

Derek Jarman: Blue Now
Live realisations of director Jarman's *Blue* 30 years after the original film's completion. Live readings of the script along with a performance of the score by composer Simon Fisher Turner. Using text from Jarman's diaries – together with sound design and a plain blue screen – as he struggles with losing his faculties, the film was completed just months before his death from HIV: Brighton Theatre Royal Brighton (7 May), Margate Turner Contemporary (13), Manchester Home (21) and London Tate Modern (27). fueltheatre.com

Lara Jones
Saxophonist improvising and composing soundscapes and grooves with electronics: Edinburgh Wavetable (18 May), Glasgow Glad Cafe (19), Manchester Soup (7 June), Newcastle upon Tyne The Lubber

Fiend (8), London Bardona (22), Birmingham Mostly Jazz Festival (8 July), Coventry Just Dropped In Records (29). larajonesmusic.com

Bassekou Kouyate & Ngoni Ba
The Ngoni master and his band return: Aberystwyth Arts Centre (30 May), Milton Keynes The Stables (31), Leeds Howard Assembly Room (1 June), Bangor Neuadd Ogwen (2), Liverpool Philharmonic (3), Manchester Band On The Wall (4), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (5), Nottingham Lakeside Arts Centre (6), Swansea Taliesin Arts Centre (7), Bristol St George's (8), Bury Saint Edmunds The Apex (9), London Union Chapel (10). bassekou.com

Lankum
Contemporary folk group from Dublin. They were the subject of Shirley Collins's Epiphanies piece in *The Wire* 438: London Barbican (4 May), Glasgow Saint Luke's (10), Manchester Band On The Wall (11), Bristol SWX (12), Belfast Mandela Hall (19), Cork Opera House (20), Dublin Vicar Street (29–31), Portlaw Curraghmore House (4 August), London The Roundhouse (13 December). lankumdublin.com

James Brandon Lewis
Two shows for the US saxophonist in a trio with Josh Werner on electric bass and Chad Taylor on drums. London Vortex, 27 May, 7pm & 9pm, £20, vortexjazz.co.uk

Loudspeaker Orchestra
Music for multiple loudspeakers in a resonant underground tunnel with new work by Bede Williams & Andrew Knight-Hill for trumpet and electronics; music from *Over Lunan* by Andrew Knight-Hill; and a percussion and electronics set by Second Citizen (Angus Farquhar & Cameron Sinclair). London Brunel Museum, 17 May, 7pm, £5, loudspeakerorchestra.org

M(h)aol
Irish feminist post-punks whose debut album *Attachment Styles* is out now: Newcastle upon Tyne Bobikis (19 May), Glasgow Hug And Pint (20), Leeds Hyde Park Book Club (22), Manchester Yes (23), London Boston Music Room (25) and Brighton The Hope And Ruin (26). tix.to/Mhaol-Live

Baaba Maal
Senegalese singer-songwriter performs tracks from his latest album *Being*. London Barbican, 30 May, 7:30pm, £45–£10, barbican.org.uk

Puce Mary
Two dates for the vocalist and power electronics exponent: Bristol Cube Cinema (17 May) and London Corsica Studios (18), bandsintown.com

Meridian Brothers
Off centre electro-cumbia outfit from Columbia. The second Bristol date is a daytime all-ages concert: Bristol Jam Jar (19 May), Bristol Jam Jar (20, noon), Cardiff The Globe (20), London Kings Place (21). meridianbrothers.bandcamp.com

Elaine Mitchener & Apartment House
The vocalist and new music ensemble perform a late night programme including Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs For A Mad King* which will be the first time the experimental monodrama has been performed by a female singer. London Wigmore Hall, 26 May, 10pm, £20–£5, wigmore-hall.org.uk

Mdou Moctar
Nigerien guitarist and his group play their hypnotic Saharan rock at a one-off UK date. London Electric Ballroom, 15 May, 7pm, £24.75. seetickets.com

Moor Mother: Jazz Codes
The activist, performance poet, producer and collaborator returns to the Barbican to perform her latest album for Anti- with guests including Elaine Mitchener and Pat Thomas. London Barbican, 20 May, 8pm, £24–£15., vortexjazz.co.uk

Osees
John Dwyer's experimental garage rock combo return: Manchester Albert Hall (18 May), Glasgow Old Fruitmarket (19), Edinburgh Summerhall (20), Dublin Button Factory (22–23), Liverpool Invisible Wind Factory (25), Birmingham The Crossing (26), London Wide Awake Festival (27), Brighton Chalk (28), Bristol Marble Factory (30) and Leeds Brudenell Social Club (31). theeohsees.com

Pram
A handful of UK dates for Birmingham's cinematic post-rock band: Glasgow The Old Hairdresser's (31 May), Newcastle upon Tyne Cobalt Studios (1 June), Stourbridge Claptrap (2), London Moth Club (3) and Bristol The Cube (4), dominomusic.com

Sound Unwrapped
Concert series exploring spatial dimensions in live performance including a 19 loudspeaker sound system: Attacca Quartet play Caroline Shaw, John Adams, Flying Lotus (4 May), Valentina Magaletti (7), Ligeti Quartet Play Steve Reich's *Different Trains* (12), Oren Ambarchi, Johan Berthling & Andreas Werliin Ghosted (14), Levitation Orchestra & Iranian modular synthesist Pouya Ehsaei (14), 12 Ensemble & GBSR play Mica Levi, and Harold Budd & Brian Eno's *The Plateaux Of Mirror* (26). London Kings Place, various times & prices, kingsplace.co.uk

Al Wootton + Mike Bourne + Robert Ridley Shackleton + Insists
Underground dance moves in a rare live set by Wootton and anti-pop from Robert Ridley Shackleton. London Walthamstow Trades Hall (upstairs), 27 May, 7pm–1am, £10.40, ra.co

Mdou Moctar

Incoming

Beaches Brew Italy
Free festival on the shores of the Adriatic Sea with a diverse range of artists including billy woods, Mabe Fratti, Lankum, Liv.e, Pongo and Phelimuncasi. Marina di Ravenna Hana-Bi, 5–8 June, free, beachesbrew.com

Blurred Edges Germany
Two weeks of experimental music events in Hamburg including performances, lectures, video and sound installations. Hamburg musicians plus Fred Frith, Cat Hope, Tom DJll, Jooklo Duo and Tobias Delius. Plus music by Raven Chacon, John Cage and Philip Glass. Hamburg various venues, 2–18 June, €45, vamh.de

Monheim Triennale Germany
The second edition of this German festival focuses on sound art in public spaces over the course of a month. Participating artists include Chris Watson, Emeka Ogboh, Robert Wilson, Caroline Devine, John Grzinich and Staalplaat Soundsystem. Monheim am Rhein various venues, 3 June–2 July, monheim-triennale.de

Semibreve Portugal
Portuguese festival of electronic music and digital art. With performances, installations, talks and workshops. Artists so far announced include Kali Malone, Nkisi, Kassel Jaeger & Eléonore Huisse, Emeralds, Mumdance and Tujiko Noriko & Joji Koyama. Braga various venues, 26–29 October, festivalsemibreve.com

The Silent Eye UK
The Wire and Reece Ewing present a screening of a film of pianist Cecil Taylor and dancer Min Tanaka performing together in Taylor's Brooklyn apartment in 2016, plus a response to the film by pianist Pat Thomas and butoh dancer Mai Nguyen Tri. London Cafe Oto, 4 June, 8pm, cafeoto.co.uk

Terraforma Italy
Experimental music festival in woodland just outside of Milan. This year's programme is inspired by Don & Moki Cherry's Organic Music Society. Artists announced so far include: The Master Musicians Of Jajouka, Tikiman & Scion, Actress, Beatrice Dillon & Kuljit Bhamra, Dennis Bovell, Dawuna, Still House Plants, Josey Rebelle, Exotic Sin featuring Tyson, Hudson Mohawke, Donato Dozzy B2B Marco Shuttle, Batu, Josey Rebelle and Still House Plants. Milan Villa Arconati, 9–11 June, terraformafestival.com

Send listings at least two months in advance to listings@thewire.co.uk. For more events listings go to thewire.co.uk/events, follow @thewiremagazine on Twitter, and sign up to our weekly newsletter at thewire.co.uk/newsletters

WH Moustapha

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Recent items posted on thewire.co.uk

Paul St Hilaire

Mihály Víg

Kate Fagan

Video
A sequence of AI-assisted visuals by patten.

Audio
Playlists exploring the hurdy-gurdy, Tastuya Yoshida, Paul St Hilaire, and 577 Records; plus *The Wire*'s latest Office Ambience.

Writing
Louise Gray's selection of ten pieces of writing from *The Wire*'s online library; David Grundy's tribute to Wayne Shorter; Mihály Víg's recollections of Hungary's Soviet-era scene; and an extract from Jen B Larson's *Hit Girls: Women Of Punk In The USA 1975–83* on Chicago's Kate Fagan and Bitch.

Listings
Details of forthcoming festivals, concerts, exhibitions, talks, workshops, online streams and other events added daily.

Listen to recent editions of Adventures In Sound And Music

Zubin Kanga

Jason Nazary (right) and Saint Abdullah

Screaming Females

30 March
Chris Bohn played music from Malawi, Uganda, China, Japan, Germany, Czech Republic, and more.

23 March
James Gormley played tracks by Natural Information Society, Ale Hop & Laura Robles, Eiko Ishibashi & Jim O'Rourke, Zubin Kanga, and more.

16 March
Shane Woodman hosted a guest mix by Saint Abdullah & Jason Nazary, and played tracks by Brìghde Chaimbeul, The Space Lady, Mungo's Hi Fi, and more.

9 March
Emily Bick played tracks by Evicshen, John Wall, patten, Asher Gamedze, and more.

2 March
Joseph Stannard played tracks by Screaming Females, Leyden Jars, Boris, Death Valley Girls, and more.

For full playlists of each show go to thewire.co.uk/audio/on-air.

To listen back to all *The Wire*'s radio shows go to mixcloud.com/thewiremagazine.

Adventures In Sound And Music is *The Wire*'s weekly show on Resonance 104.4 FM and Resonance Extra. It is broadcast every Thursday between 9–10:30pm with simultaneous streaming at resonancefm.com.

Coming next month: the June issue of *The Wire*

472

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9 May

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Joanna St Hilaire (St Hilaire); Balazs Fromm (Víg); Amy Rothblatt (Fagan); Joseph Delaney (Kanga); Ryan Easter (Nazary & Abdullah)

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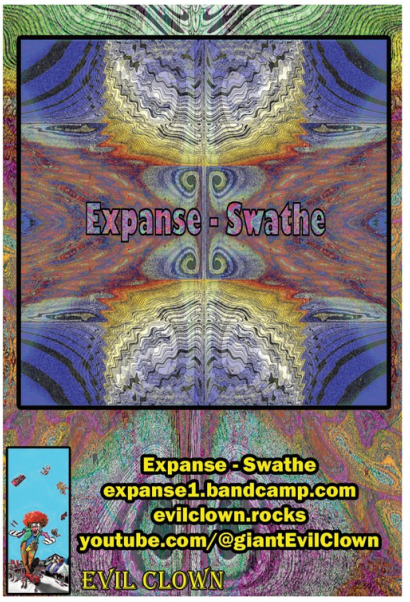

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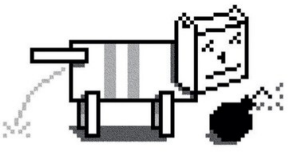

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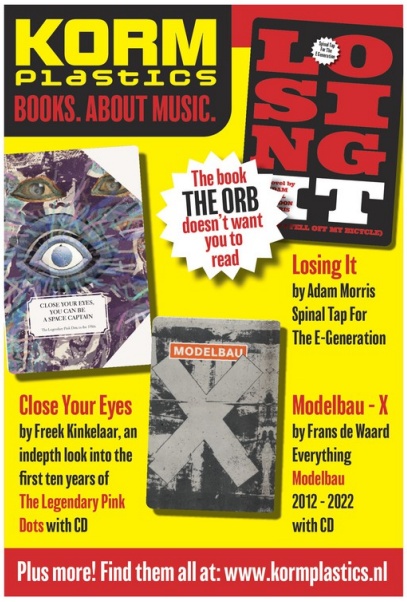

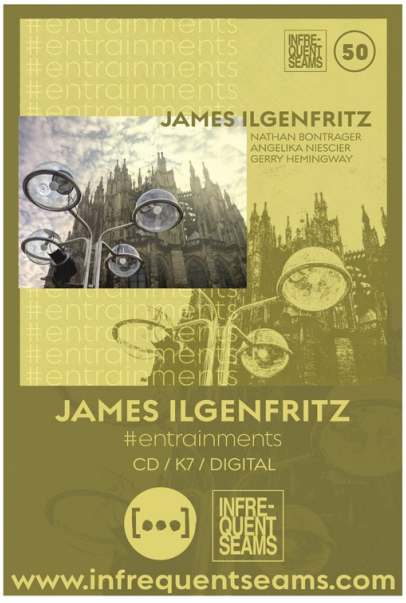

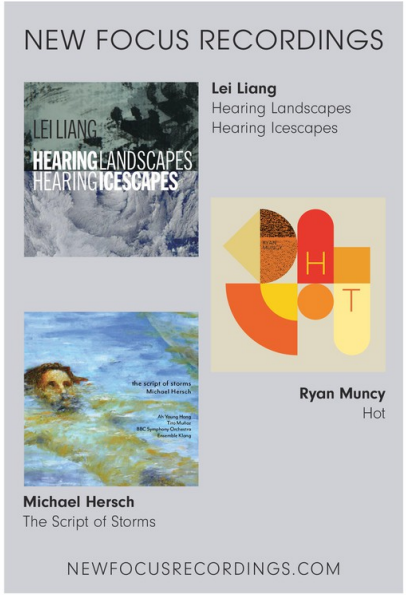

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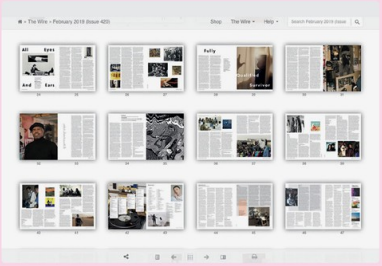
*Access to the complete online library



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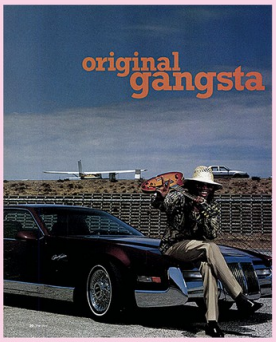
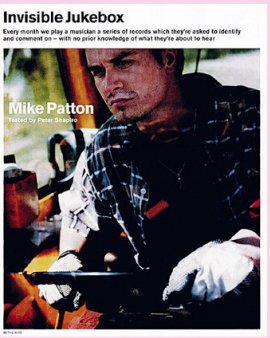
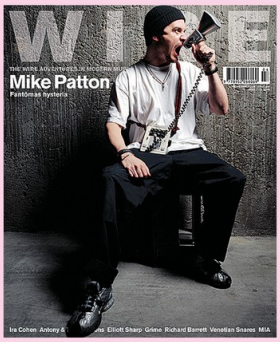


Ben Watson meets Johnny 'Guitar' Watson
Issue 126 August 1994

Dave Tompkins on Dwight Trible's *Horace*
Issue 189 November 1999



Mike Patton's Invisible Jukebox
Issue 211 September 2001



Phil Freeman meets Mike Patton
Issue 254 April 2005

David Stubbs meets Electrelane
Issue 255 May 2005

Robin Howells meets Sandwell District
Issue 334 December 2011

Simon Reynolds says: "We are all David Toop now"
Issue 338 April 2012

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Electrelane founder Verity Susman recalls her childhood sense of solidarity singing the Woodcraft Folk movement's protest songs against apartheid-era South Africa

A soundtracked hike with Woodcraft Folk, late 1980s

Growing up I was a member of Woodcraft Folk, a cooperative youth movement in the UK with links to left wing youth organisations around the world. Run by volunteers, it was set up in 1925 as an alternative to the militarism of the much better known Scouts, and as a way of giving inner city London children the chance to spend time in the countryside. I joined as a six year old in the 1980s after my mum started a local group.

We would go hiking at the weekends and camping in the summer. We also had weekly 'group nights' in a local hall, playing games, singing songs, doing craft activities and – as far as we were able as young children – debating the big political and environmental issues of the day. I remember the destruction of the Amazon rainforests, apartheid and the nuclear arms race were topics we tried to get our heads around, and we would go on protest marches which gave us a sense of activism beyond mere discussion. We sang folk songs like "Blowin' In The Wind", "Joe Hill", "Bread And Roses", "If I Had A Hammer" and "Donna Donna": songs of peace, protest and freedom, often with a socialist bent. I knew them just as Woodcraft songs, and it wasn't until years later that I'd heard of Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez and the world of folk.

At our summer camps there were regular campfires with singing. I remember a sense of awe at being outdoors in the fields, in the dark under the stars, with a campfire burning and an acoustic guitar being strummed, and songs that were beyond my understanding but tugged at me on an emotional level. One that has stayed with me is "Dirty Old Town" by Ewan MacColl: *"I heard a siren from the docks/ Saw a train set the night on fire/I smelled the spring on the smoky wind/Dirty old town, Dirty old town"*. The poetically defiant lyrics and the bittersweet turn to a minor chord at the end of each chorus evoked a sense of longing and heartache that I couldn't name but could feel.

Woodcraft Folk has a long history of international solidarity. It was involved in the anti-apartheid movement in the UK, including collecting donations to send to children at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO), a school in Tanzania established by the African National Congress for young South Africans living in exile. In the summer of 1988 my mum managed to arrange for a group of children from the school to attend Woodcraft Folk's international camp in the UK, and two years later, at the age of 11, I was part of a return delegation of children to SOMAFCO. Every morning we joined hundreds of pupils lined up in the school yard to sing "Nkosi Sikelel' I-Afrika" ("God Bless Africa"), the anthem of the ANC and now, in a modified form, the South African national anthem. The beautiful harmonies sung by the children were breathtaking. Looking back, it was the moment I fell in love with the power of vocal harmonising, although at the time I didn't realise its significance beyond the pure thrill of being a part of this mass of voices.

As I grew up, Woodcraft remained a part of my life, but I always understood it as something separate from my life in music. I had a fairly traditional classical music education as a child, learning instruments and playing in a local youth orchestra, and then rebelled a bit in my late teens starting an indie rock band, Electrelane, which ended up becoming my job for the next decade.

I didn't think about the role that Woodcraft had played in my musical development until 2020, when the French film director Sonia Gonzalez approached me to write the soundtrack to *Women Against The Bomb*, her documentary about the women's peace camp at Greenham Common airbase in the UK. The camp was set up in 1981 by a grassroots group of women trying to block the installation of US nuclear weapons on European soil, and it brought together women from all walks of life, young and old, many of whom had never protested before, and it sparked the beginning of a global ecofeminist movement. At its peak 70,000 women gathered at Greenham Common to protest.

Singing was very important to the Greenham women, and Gonzalez asked me and my co-composer Matthew Simms (my collaborator in the band Memorials) to write some songs that audiences could imagine having been sung at the peace camp. I knew many Woodcraft leaders had spent time at Greenham Common, and as I listened to archive recordings of women singing at the camp, I realised there was also crossover in the songs that were sung. I realised how deeply the music at Woodcraft Folk had inscribed itself into me; the musical language was there at my fingertips. I realised too that the raw emotionality of the folk songs I grew up singing, combined with their infectious, haunting melodies, was something I had been striving for in my songwriting as an adult.

Today, I weave voices singing in harmony into much of the music I make, and I trace this passion back to those weeks I spent listening and singing at SOMAFCO. ○

Memorials' *Music For Film: Tramps! & Women Against The Bomb* is released by The state51 Conspiracy this month

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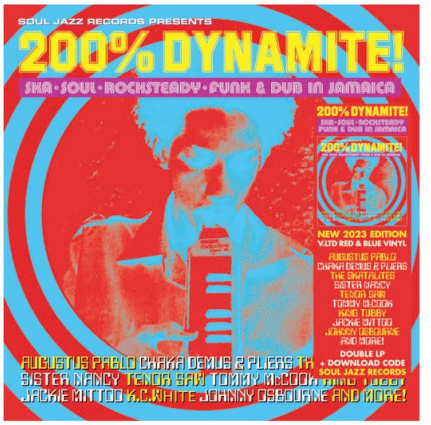

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SOUL JAZZ RECORDS